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# Letter from the Executive Director

Dear friends,

Our founders, Mel and Dave Murray, started JoyCorps with the vision to promote community flourishing. In the initial years, we came alongside entrepreneurs running intrepid ventures in underserved regions, like the Tibetan plateau, the semi-urban foothills of the Himalayas, and the border regions of the Golden Triangle in Southeast Asia. There, we funded critical initiatives in nutrition, healthcare, financial literacy, access to finance, and children's education.

“

*We were founded with a vision to promote community flourishing through finding and supporting businesses that provide safe, stable, and dignified work—offering crucial pathways out of poverty.*

”

These were our foundational years. Through proximity to entrepreneurs and the vulnerable regions they worked in, we formed our core values and started to understand the range of support and services that were required. With this understanding, in 2018, Mel and Dave Murray spent a year as Entrepreneurs-in-Residence at Praxis Labs' Venture Studio, where they ushered JoyCorps into a new chapter of growth to build local and regional ecosystems of resources and community for entrepreneurs who are committed to creating flourishing communities through their businesses.

Since 2019, JoyCorps has supported 45+ such entrepreneurs through the JoyCorps Fellowship and recently through the JoyCorps Ecosystem, while growing our vision for a resilient community of practice in South Asia. In 2022, we launched JoyCorps Studio, which offers design thinking methodologies enabling high-impact organizations to collaborate with their communities and co-design solutions addressing social issues that affect them.

At JoyCorps, our approach focuses on the three areas that we feel are critical to entrepreneurship development: venture building, social impact, and the entrepreneur's holistic formation. We see entrepreneurs as whole persons. Who they are and who they are becoming overflows into the work they do. An entrepreneur's formation influences the social impact they seek to make with their ventures and

vice versa, and both of these influence and are influenced by the financial sustainability and growth of their ventures. In the subsequent pages, my team and I will introduce you to our programs, partners, and entrepreneurs. We continue to be deeply grateful for your support and encouragement, without which our work would not be possible.



**Sam Parakkal**  
Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sam Parakkal".



# ABOUT US

At JoyCorps,  
we equip  
entrepreneurs to  
cultivate thriving  
communities.



Concept & Launch

Growth

Scale

We equip entrepreneurs by providing relevant services for different stages of a venture's journey, from concept to scale, through the following programs:

## JoyCorps Ecosystem

JoyCorps Ecosystem involves regional engagement to stimulate city-based ecosystems for new entrepreneurial ventures. Through strategic partnerships with like-minded organizations in cities across India, the Ecosystem team offers a 9-week in-person program called 'JoyCorps Aspire' that helps concept-stage entrepreneurs create a robust business model to launch their ventures. In Aspire, concept-stage entrepreneurs are guided by coaches, mentors, and other ecosystem members to tackle the key challenges they typically face, including the lack of business acumen and founder isolation.

## JoyCorps Fellowship

JoyCorps Fellowship is a nine months program for a cohort of 6-10 first-generation entrepreneurs who are running micro manufacturing and retail businesses in textiles, jewelry, food processing, and dairy farming among others. JoyCorps' Fellows are typically in their early-growth phase. The Fellowship team supports them in this stage with coaching, financial resources, mentoring and business consulting. We especially target individuals in smaller cities and semi-urban areas in India because these areas do not often have adequate entrepreneurial support ecosystems.

## JoyCorps Studio

JoyCorps Studio is our out-bound consulting program launched in 2022. The Studio team works with other values-aligned organizations embedded within the communities most marginalized by the current global systems, and therefore vulnerable to exploitation. Utilizing design thinking methodologies, the Studio team offers research, strategy design and comprehensive problem and stakeholder mapping services that enable entrepreneurs to move away from an assumption-based approach to a more deeply informed, human-centered approach.



## The Entrepreneurs We Work With

JoyCorps works with entrepreneurs who build ventures to systematically deploy their tested solutions to issues of vulnerability and exploitation in their communities. JoyCorps' entrepreneurs have strong proximity to the place their ventures are located in, the communities they work in, and the products and/or services they offer, since each of these ties closely to why they forayed into entrepreneurship.

They may run businesses or not-for-profit ventures. In both cases, the idea and purpose of the ventures are the most influential driving forces, while profitability and fundraising are critical to actualizing the purpose. Finally, our entrepreneurs don't commonly come from a formal business background but from many different walks of life.



Entrepreneurs and JoyCorps Fellows Aditi, Gabriella, and David in a panel discussion on 'Leadership' at the 2024 Fellowship Orientation Week.

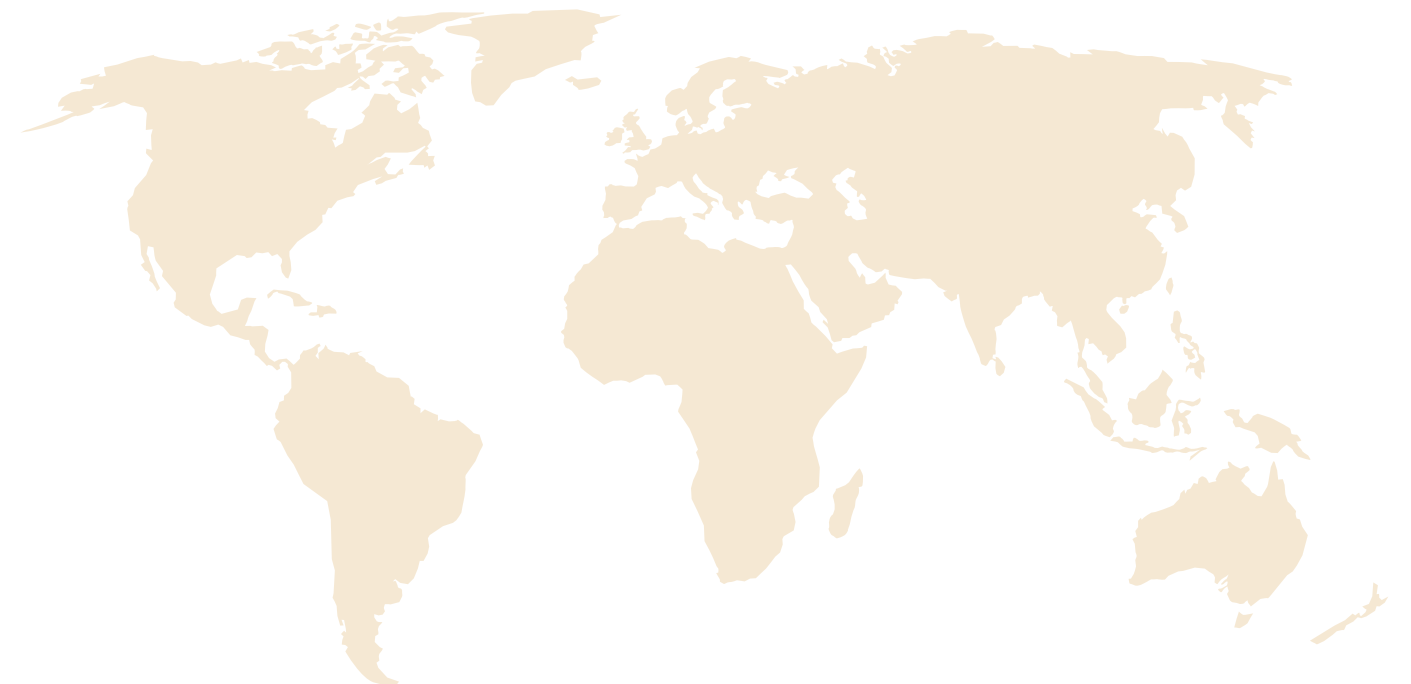
## Our Three Areas of Focus

From our long experience of work with entrepreneurs, we have come to the critical understanding that for entrepreneurs to make lasting changes in their communities, they need holistic support that encompasses venture building, social impact, and the personal formation of the entrepreneur. Our entrepreneurs' vision often requires more innovation, increased effort, and unique challenges. It can be a difficult and sometimes lonely journey for them. We come alongside them by providing an ecosystem of coaching, resources, and inspiration to help their ventures grow. With a supportive community around them, entrepreneurs can focus on deploying their creative solutions to spark positive change in the world.



## Where we work:

The JoyCorps Fellowship and Ecosystem programs work in India and Nepal, with the hope of expanding to the rest of South Asia. JoyCorps Studio works across the globe, including the USA, Nepal, and India.



# 2024: Year in Review

# Financials

## EVENTS WE ATTENDED

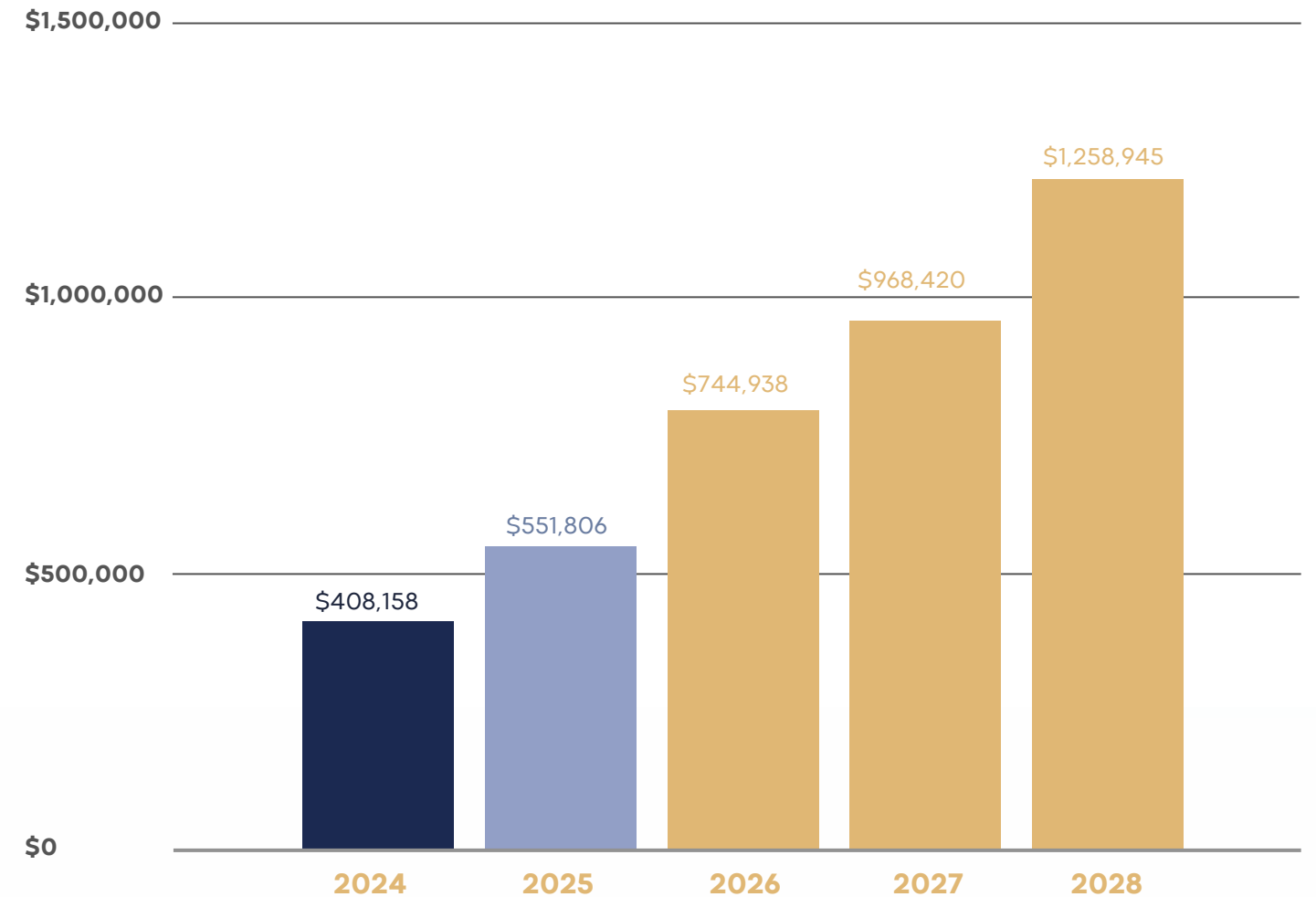
- May:** • **JoyCorps Studio** attends the Freedom Business Forum, Thailand (page 21-22)
- June:** • **JoyCorps Studio** attends Belmont University's Impact Labs, where they facilitate design thinking workshops. (page 13)
- September:** • **JoyCorps Ecosystem** attends the Sports Coalition Movement Conference in Goa, where they presented the model for the Aspire program
- October :** • **JoyCorps Studio** attends Belmont University's HOPE Summit.

## EVENTS WE HOSTED

- April:** • **JoyCorps Fellowship** hosts the Orientation Week with the 2024 Fellowship cohort (page 27, page 14-15 )
- November:** • **JoyCorps** hosts the annual Business Reimagined Summit 2024 (page 30)
- **JoyCorps** hosts its all-team first annual Internal Strategy Summit in Dehradun, India, charting our work path in 2025 and subsequent years.

## PROGRESS OF PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS

- May-Oct:** • **Fellowship program** runs for six months (page 28-29)
- June:** • **JoyCorps Studio** conducts research and workshops for the Kansas City Project.
- October:** • **JoyCorps Studio** presents its findings and process from the Kansas City project to the Global Orphan leadership team.
- November:** • **JoyCorps Studio** signs a contract with Shikhar Enterprises in India to identify opportunities for Freedom Business in Bihar (page 22)
- January:** • **JoyCorps Ecosystem** conducts Aspire program's Training of Trainers in Kochi (page 47)
- February:** • **JoyCorps Ecosystem** conducts Aspire program's Training of Trainers in Delhi.
- **JoyCorps Studio** develops a new journey mapping framework to understand how vulnerable families move from a place of suffering to stability (pages 16-20)
- **JoyCorps Fellowship** undertakes a review of the Fellowship program in consultation with social entrepreneur Yogesh Kumar.



From 2025 - 2028, we are raising \$3.5 million in general operating support. We want to thank all of our partners who make our work possible. We couldnt do this with out you!



# Partner Feature



Sharing values. Investing together.  
Creating opportunity.

As the philanthropic arm of the P&G Alumni Network, the P&G Alumni Foundation multiplies the efforts of its alumni, providing people in need with economic paths to prosperity. Through strategic grant making to charitable organizations with active P&G alumni involvement, the Foundation empowers people around the globe to build bright, sustainable futures through job, vocational training, and new business start-ups. Thanks to the support of JoyCorps Board Member and P&G alumnus Henry Ho, JoyCorps has developed a strong relationship with the P&G Alumni Foundation. To date, the Foundation has awarded us three grants, which have supported the JoyCorps Fellowship and other initiatives. We are deeply grateful to the P&G Alumni Foundation for their continued support.

“Supporting JoyCorps through the P&G Alumni Foundation grant process has been a deeply inspiring experience and a perfect reflection of our shared purpose—paying it forward to improve lives for generations to come. Through strategic grantmaking to organizations like JoyCorps, we multiply the efforts of P&G Alumni around the world, helping provide people in need with real paths to economic stability. The Foundation’s mission—to harness the power of our global Alumni Network, with gratitude for the skills and friendships built at P&G—comes alive in this work. With Grant Champion Alumni like Henry Ho leading the way, JoyCorps empowers redemptive entrepreneurs to build sustainable businesses that address community challenges with dignity and innovation. From providing business training to 70 entrepreneurs to strengthening 12 businesses and creating 50 jobs, the impact is tangible. The P&G Alumni Foundation is proud to be part of supporting JoyCorps that helps people economically thrive and build brighter, more resilient futures. Best regards, Sarah Woods & the P&G Alumni Foundation Team”

## WAYS TO PARTNER WITH US



### Fund our programs

Please consider supporting our ongoing and new initiatives financially. Contact [sam@joycorps.org](mailto:sam@joycorps.org)



### Introduce us to your network

Introduce us to others in your network who may be interested in our work.



### Visit Us in India

If you are interested to visit us and our entrepreneurs in India, we will be happy to create an itinerary for you and host you at any time of the year. Contact [shweta@joycorps.org](mailto:shweta@joycorps.org)



### Consult/Mentor

Consult with or mentor our team and/or the entrepreneurs in our networks. Let us know if you have experience in business training, leadership development, and more, and if you can volunteer your time.



### Invite

If you think we would be able to add value to the work you are doing in entrepreneurship development and design thinking, or if you would like us to participate in your conference/event, please reach out to us, we would be keen to show up!



### Stay in Touch

Sign up for our newsletter on [www.joycorps.org](http://www.joycorps.org)

Follow us on social media:

[linkedin.com/joycorps](https://www.linkedin.com/company/joycorps)

[linkedin.com/joycorps-studio](https://www.linkedin.com/company/joycorps-studio)

[vimeo.com/joycorps](https://vimeo.com/joycorps)



# JoyCorps Studio

Hi there,

I'm excited to share with you the projects Studio has been working on over the past year. Our desire is to create space and opportunity for the communities most marginalised by our current global systems to co-design the future. We do this by embracing a posture of design thinking and utilising a systems practice approach, helping our clients shift their perspective in how they approach the wicked problems that they face.

When we talk about 'wicked problems' we are referring to societal and environmental challenges that are very complex - like human trafficking, child poverty and our changing climate. Designing solutions to these types of problems are difficult for a number of reasons; they are constantly changing, involve multiple stakeholders spanning geographical boundaries, and they are interconnected with other dynamic problems.

As a team we bring a vast breadth of experience to our projects including; research, data collection and analysis, design, and systems thinking. It's this variety of skill, paired with values such as; empathy, curiosity and creativity that allow for the Studio team to enter into this valuable and much needed work in the world.

Over the last year we have been privileged to work with clients and be invited to conferences across Asia and the USA. It's clear that there is a growing hunger to design solutions in a way that amplifies and includes the voices of the knowledge holders - those who are living within the problems we are trying to address. As you continue to read this update, my hope is that you're encouraged by our research and challenged to engage in new ways of thinking when it comes to community engagement and problem solving.

**Josie Mackenzie**  
*Lead of the JoyCorps Studio*



## 2024 YEAR IN REVIEW

This last year has been a dynamic one for Studio. It has involved plenty of travel, new projects, and workshops, with many opportunities to put our design thinking skills to the test. We have flourished as a team of three, finding fluidity and confidence in each other's strengths. It's been a joy to work together!



*The Studio team in Washington DC*

We were honored to be invited to the Freedom Business Forum held in Thailand. Studio was one of the sponsors of the Forum and contributed to a panel discussion on human trafficking prevention and community-centered development. The Forum gave us an opportunity to launch the report we developed in partnership with two Nepali anti-trafficking organizations, titled "Activating a Design Thinking and Systems Approach - to Encourage Community Reintegration for Survivors of Trafficking in Nepal". You can read more about this work and download the report on pages 21-22.



*Asha and Erica at the Studio stall, Freedom Business Forum Thailand*

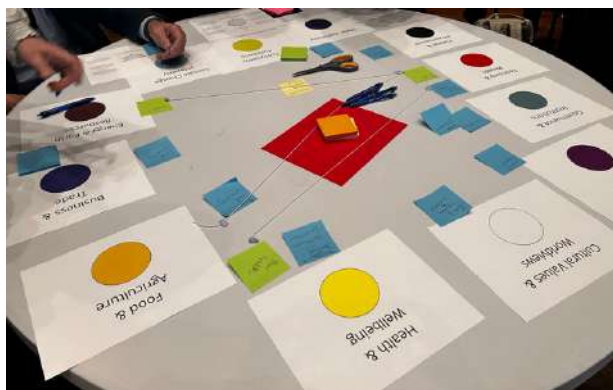


*Josie speaking on a panel, Freedom Business Forum Thailand*





Last year, we also had the opportunity to work with the Impact Teams at Belmont University, based in Nashville, USA, initially facilitating human-centered design workshops for their entrepreneurs in residence and then attending their annual HOPE Summit to facilitate a breakout session on systems thinking and a roundtable discussion on human-centered design. With 60 participants attending our breakout session, it was our largest workshop yet - an excellent opportunity to reach a large audience and introduce a new systems mapping tool we adapted for the context.



Systems Mapping, Belmont University HOPE Summit



Studio Leading a systems thinking workshop at HOPE Summit

Our project researching community wraparound care for vulnerable families in Kansas City took significant strides in 2024. We were able to conduct interviews with a variety of stakeholders, including families, churches, and local government. In 2024, we made two trips to Kansas City to connect with and work with the team on the ground. To add to the excitement, we began a new project researching freedom business opportunities for survivors of trafficking and bonded labor in Bihar, India. We are excited to facilitate four days of workshops and field visits in Bihar this coming May. You can learn more about this project on page 22

*All in all, a whirlwind of a year - for which we are very grateful.*

## SOCIAL INNOVATION DAY - FELLOWS WORKSHOP

In April 2024, Studio was asked to lead Social Innovation Day for the JoyCorps Fellowship Orientation Week. We planned an experimental workshop introducing Fellows to the 'double diamond,' a framework we utilize across all our projects to engage a design thinking approach. The first diamond covers the 'discover' and 'define' phases of the project, where we encourage participants to move away from simply assuming they know what the problem is, to engaging with those experiencing it. This process helps redefine the problem in a new way. The second diamond looks at the phases 'develop' and 'deliver,' encouraging participants to give different answers to the clearly defined problem. Testing solutions on a small scale, iterating and prototyping to discover the solutions that work and rejecting the ones that don't.

To illustrate the framework to the Fellows, we designed the workshop around a problem local to Dehradun, where the Fellowship team was hosting the Orientation Week- the conservation of medicinal plants in the Malsi forest (a beautiful patch of woodland that provides space for human recreation, plant biodiversity, and animal habitat.) We asked the Fellows to explore the following design questions:

***What would it look like for Malsi forest to be a trail-blazing example of regenerative medicinal plant conservation that provides the local community with access to green space, training, and employment opportunities?***



JoyCorps Fellows Archana and Samsun identifying local fauna



JoyCorps Fellow Kunal studying the stakeholder map

We encouraged the Fellows to imagine that they were a local entrepreneur and their brief was to develop an innovative way that profit could be generated whilst also regenerating the forest and engaging relevant stakeholders. The 'discovery' phase started in the Malsi forest with the Fellows engaging with the plants, wildlife and humans that use the space. We then facilitated a stakeholder mapping session where Fellows had to think from different perspectives and then moved into a series of ideation and prototyping sessions.





## MAPPING BURSTS OF FLOURISHING: A DESIGN THINKING JOURNEY FROM SUFFERING TO STABILITY



JoyCorps Fellows and team during the workshop

### The Backdrop

Behind every child in foster care is a family that was doing its best- but often didn't have the support to stay together. In the U.S., poverty is still too often mistaken for neglect, and that misunderstanding leads to many children entering the system each year. The impact can be long-lasting, affecting their sense of stability, belonging, and opportunity well into adulthood.

But thankfully not all stories end that way. Across communities and cities, people are quietly working to change the script. Local churches, businesses, non profits, and neighbours are stepping in to help with their presence, consistency and care. These efforts are holding families together, one connection at a time. The impact is real. Still, the weight of this work often falls on community organisations, who carry a significant part of the heavy lifting. They are under-resourced and left out of larger conversations on systemic change. And yet, they are the ones closest to the families, the ones who know their struggles, their strengths, and what they need to stay together.

The question isn't just how to provide help—it's how to empower those already doing the work.

### The Brief

Working with the Global Orphan Project, Kansas City, this project builds on an existing framework which was created for communities to better support vulnerable families in their neighbourhood. The framework is about understanding the real, lived experiences of women as they move from suffering to safety, stability, and ultimately, flourishing. We want to know: What helps them make these shifts? Are there common threads in their journeys?

By listening to their stories and identifying the key elements that support change, we can uncover meaningful insights. The goal? To strengthen wraparound care so that more families have the support they need to not just survive, but thrive.

### The Process: First Mapping

The journey mapping process started almost unintentionally. We had planned interviews with stakeholders, but one key piece was missing—we hadn't yet decided how to engage the women directly. Sitting in a café, we started brainstorming. To understand how women transition through different phases—suffering, safety, stability, and flourishing—and whether there are common patterns in their journeys, asking direct, personal questions to people who didn't know us well didn't feel like the right approach. That's when the idea of mapping came up.



The workshop concluded with Fellows using clay to depict their vision of conservation

It was a rapid introduction to the double diamond, but the Fellows came up with genius ideas combining tourism and environmental conservation.

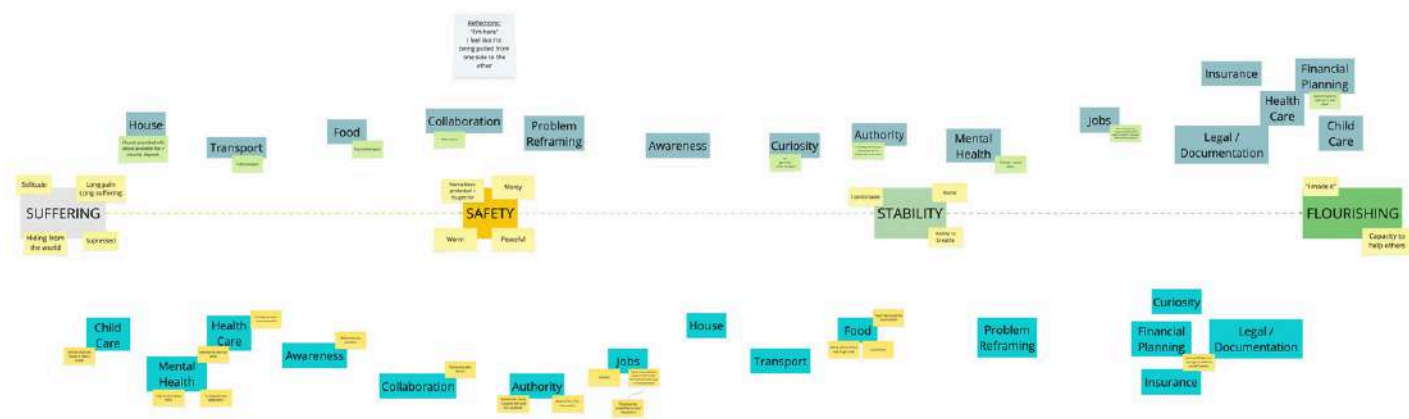




Could we lay out their experiences in a straight line to make them easier to follow? What if we used cards, allowing them to place different needs and experiences along the timeline of their journey? This way, they could express their journey visually rather than feeling pressured to share personal details outright.

As we proceeded with the work, we realized it wasn't just about mapping needs but also about understanding how women defined the four phases for themselves. What did suffering, safety, stability, and flourishing mean in their own words? Here, we gained a powerful insight: many women described flourishing as stepping into the suffering of others.

Later, we gathered supplies and sketched out the first version of the map, refining it as we went. What started as a simple conversation in a café became a tool for uncovering deep insights, helping women not only share their journeys but define them in their own terms.



### Reflections from First Mapping

Sitting with eight women as they mapped their journeys was a vulnerable process—messy, tender, and incredibly resilient. It wasn't just about understanding where they'd been but also how they made sense of it, what kept them going, and how they chose to keep showing up.

One thing became clear early on: flourishing isn't an endpoint. It comes in bursts- small, unexpected moments of light that spark hope and give momentum. Sometimes, it looked like getting out of bed after weeks of not wanting to. Sometimes, it looked like helping someone else through their storm. Many women described flourishing as just that- stepping into another's suffering because they knew what it felt like to sit in it alone.

We also began to see how tangled things are. For example, an individual's mental health cannot be

separated from whether there's food in their fridge. Similarly, a woman's ability to show curiosity about possible changes in her life depends on her having the headspace to reflect, which might depend on having someone to watch the kids.

The pieces are connected, and any support given has to acknowledge this web of needs.

One of the questions we asked was, "How would you lead someone else through this?" And something shifted- many of the women moved from talking about what happened to them to imagining how they could guide someone else. That shift mattered, as the reflection paved the way for vision. Instead of staying rooted in what had happened to them, the women started to imagine how they might use their experiences to guide, support, or lead others.

Ultimately, it reinforced for us why co-designing solutions to complex problems is important. Stories are complex, progress is rarely neat, and these women carry wisdom even in the most challenging places. Their strength and insight can and should shape how their community/how organizations walk alongside them to be able to support them in a meaningful way.

### Second Mapping

In our second round of conversations, we found ourselves needing to rethink our approach. The original map, while insightful, was time-intensive to process and analyze. As we continued the work, it became clear that we needed a more refined process that could still hold the depth of the stories but also allow us to trace key moments, recurring elements, and the interconnections between them more clearly.

One of our biggest realizations was that women's journey isn't linear; they move in and out of suffering, safety, and stability multiple times. This awareness led us to visualize the map differently—not as a straight path but as concentric circles, with each phase layered within the next. By removing flourishing as an end goal, we designed a more holistic approach to depict moments of flourishing and convey how these bursts of energy help women move towards a more significant place of stability.

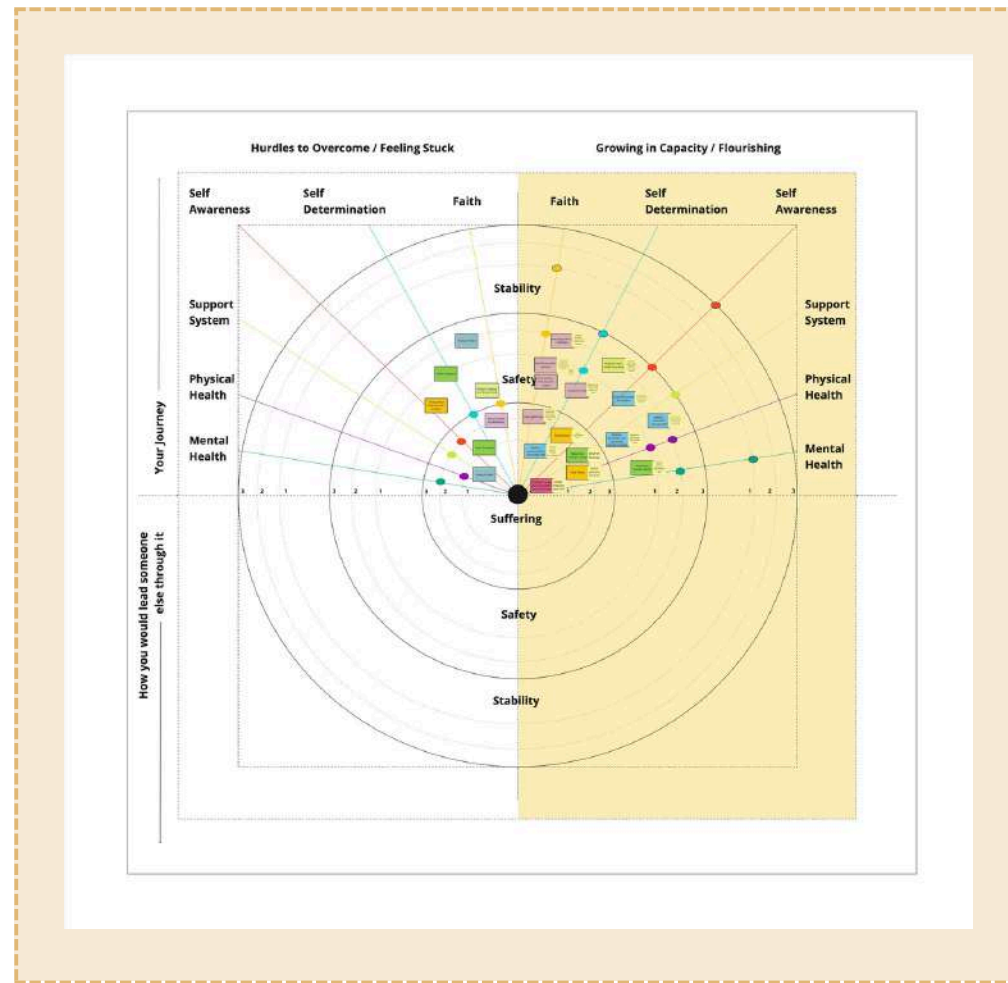
This round also made us more careful with how we asked questions. We couldn't always count on having deep trust from the start. The tone, timing, and phrasing of a question can profoundly influence how safe the women feel in sharing their stories. We began asking ourselves: how do we design a process that sets clear boundaries, protects the women's space, lets them lead, and trusts them to know what they are ready to share?

As we worked, patterns emerged: mental health, community, faith, and a sense of agency. Things rose and fell depending on the season the women were in, and the patterns were never isolated. One impacted





another, which impacted another. The more we saw the web, the clearer it became: support for women must be whole-person. It has to be empowering—something that helps women name where they are, where they've grown, and where they still hope to go.



### Reflections from First Mapping

This time, with the revised map, we could see their journey more clearly—not just where they had been, but where growth had taken place, where the hurdles lingered, and what had helped tip the balance along the way.

In the earlier version, for example, we knew a woman had access to food, but we didn't know the effort it had taken to get there. We saw that another woman did have access to transportation once in a while, but missed that it was actually one of her greatest challenges. In the second round, these details surfaced, and

they mattered because they showed us what progress really looked like—not just what the women had, but what it cost them to reach where they were and what still felt out of reach.

Yet another realization was that even when the women stepped into a place of safety, some hurdles came with them, such as debt and public transport. While they didn't stop being hurdles, they did not define the women. Enough moments of strength—of clarity, support, and resilience—appeared to carry them forward anyway. The flourishing didn't wait for everything to be perfect.

And there was harmony across the threads. As they moved toward safety, we saw self-awareness, self-determination, and their support systems emerge as strong anchors for the women. This echoed what they had named in their earlier map—curiosity, reframing, a sense of agency—but this time, we could trace them to real moments: counseling, AA meetings, and a support group. The abstract had found its roots in practice.

We also knew where they were now—firmly in a place of safety. And at that time, we could look ahead with them. When we asked what it would take to move toward stability, they named it clearly. The hurdles were steps they were already eyeing to cross over.

This round didn't just help us understand the women better—it helped them see their momentum. And that clarity? That's part of the flourishing, too.

### Moving Forward

This mapping process isn't just a research tool—it's a way of seeing- of tracing resilience, highlighting the hurdles, and noticing the small sparks that signal movement and growth. As we continue to listen and learn, this map will guide how we design support, not as a one-size-fits-all solution but as a response shaped by the lived realities of the families.

Moving forward, the hope is that this approach can help communities and care providers recognize where someone is, what's helping, and what's getting in the way so that support can be timely, targeted, and holistic. More than anything, it's a reminder that progress doesn't always look like a straight line, and there's power in mapping the journey.

It would be interesting to see how this process holds up in other contexts—different cultures, systems, and stories. Could the map offer the same kind of clarity across varied settings? That's a question worth exploring.



## IDENTIFYING ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR SURVIVORS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND BONDED LABOUR IN NEPAL AND INDIA

In 2022, we launched the Studio with our first project and wicked problem; reintegration for survivors of human trafficking in Nepal. The two Nepali organisations that we worked with had a wealth of experience across the areas of prevention, rescue and rehabilitation for the young women that they serve, however, both were facing challenges when it came to community reintegration.

The two organizations both had a strong focus on skills training and entrepreneurship, but the number of young women starting and sustaining businesses was low. The low numbers were due to many diverse reasons: the stigma that comes from being trafficked, the effects of trauma, and the financial risk of starting a business.

Our project brief was to research and then design prototypes that could support the young women in reintegrating back into the community through employment and entrepreneurship opportunities.



Illustrations by Bethan L Mitchell

The research and prototype designs that we developed by utilizing a design thinking and systems practice approach are explained and illustrated in this digital report ([LINK TO REPORT DOWNLOAD](#)). We launched the printed copy of the report during the Freedom Business Forum in Thailand in May 2024. To learn more you can watch this engaging interview between the Studio team and the former FBA Executive Director Karen Schmit ([LINK TO VIDEO](#)).

### India

Building on the research we conducted in Nepal, the Studio recently started a new project in partnership with a like-minded venture in India, SURE. SURE seeks to build progressive social change by creating a large number of micro-business enterprises. Our project explores Freedom Business opportunities for survivors of trafficking and bonded labor in Bihar, a state that borders Nepal.

We will work closely with an experienced team on the ground during this project. Learning about the successes and challenges they have encountered running livelihood projects across the state, predominantly with the Musahar community. We aim to define the dynamics of what Freedom Business could look like within the Bihar context. Along with discovering new opportunities for innovation and entrepreneurship that could provide sustainable long-term employment for those who have previously needed to migrate to find work - making them highly vulnerable to exploitation.

In May 2025, Studio will visit Bihar to facilitate workshops with community members, business people, and local government, allowing a broad range of voices to speak about the research. After the workshops, we will go out onto the field to conduct focus group discussions, with the aim of better understanding the communities' dreams, desires, barriers, and perspectives on work, along with their educational level and skill type.

We are excited to see this project unfold and its potential to create a solid foundation for Freedom Business opportunities to emerge over the coming years.





## WHAT WE LEARNED IN 2024

We are deeply shaped by the places that we inhabit. How by engaging more deeply with our surroundings will we better understand and connect with our communities? This is a question that I've been pondering over the past year - inspired by the people we've worked with who are deeply committed to living and working in one small area of our world in order to see lasting change.

**-Josie**

There is a quiet power in the people we work with –their hope, which is both fragile and fierce, and continues to rise as they fight against all odds. Fragile because repeated setbacks can shake it, and fierce because, despite everything, hope chooses to hold on.

**-Asha**

In our world, the ability to hold things loosely is so powerful because it means we are more agile and able to adapt to newer contexts. Our ability to show organizations how the problems they're addressing sit within an ever-changing network of systems, and for us to follow the design process and allow the research and voice of communities to influence the direction of the project calls for agility and adaptability for both, the organizations to survive and for us to be true to who we are.

**-Erica**



*At JoyCorps Studio,*  
we care deeply about designing workshops that are unique and tailored to the context of the participants. If you'd be interested in the Studio team facilitating a workshop for you and/or your team, we would love to connect and share further details. Contact [josie@joycorps.org](mailto:josie@joycorps.org)



# JoyCorps Fellowship

Dear friends,

In 2024-25, we embarked on another Fellowship journey with our new cohort, learning more about eight new ventures, the exemplary individuals who lead them, the social causes they are built around, and, in the process, gaining deeper insights into our own work. Our 2024 Fellowship cohort was as diverse and inspiring as our previous cohorts. Whether it is to create dignified and secure jobs for marginalized groups through small-scale manufacturing, preserve bees and their ecosystem, or celebrate the traditional textiles of India, JoyCorps Fellows run businesses that merge profits with a larger purpose. JoyCorps Fellows also pursue a diverse range of growth pathways for their ventures. Some of our Fellows plan to quickly scale their ventures to considerable heights, while others build them on a slow and consistent growth pathway. The Fellowship team is committed to creating inclusive entrepreneurial support services for diverse business models and growth aspirations. I invite you to read the following pages, where we share more about our program design, our impact, and our Fellows' impact in their communities. I also thank you for your critical partnership in supporting our work.



Shweta Kakkar led the Fellowship program in 2024

**Shweta Kakkar**  
Lead, Operations and Communication

## JOYCORPS FELLOWSHIP: OUR WHY

The JoyCorps Fellowship started in 2019 as a unique program built from the ground up in response to the felt needs of entrepreneurs in our network. We targeted micro and small enterprises in India and Nepal and focused on providing mentoring, a peer community, and a structured pathway for growth.

The vision of JoyCorps Fellowship draws inspiration from our Founders' philosophy about the joy of work, steeped in dignity and creativity. Our co-founder, Dave Murray, has long talked about work as a part of our identity, a fuller expression of ourselves.

“Our work can be a taste of the world we imagine, a representation of our values and thoughts.”

-Dave Murray, JoyCorps co-Founder

Unlike most Entrepreneur Support Organizations (ESOs) that prioritize high-growth ventures, JoyCorps Fellowship nurtures a diverse ecosystem. In today's landscape, where technical training is widely available online, the Fellowship's value lies in curating a community of first-generation entrepreneurs with rich, varied life experiences. These relationships offer a depth of wisdom and mutual support that cannot be replicated through technical training and online learning alone.



Joycorps Team, fellows and mentors at the Orientation Week 2024



## FELLOWSHIP 2024

### April: Orientation Week

Our Fellowship program started with an in-person Orientation Week that brought together JoyCorps team members, our newly recruited 2024 cohort, and some ecosystem members. The aim of the Orientation Week was to showcase the potential of businesses to advance community thriving, for the Fellows to get to know one another and the JoyCorps team, and to work together to develop a journey map for the Fellowship. Each year, the program months in the Fellowship are conducted virtually, and we have learned that when we focus on building relationships at the start of the program, we build a strong momentum for the rest of the program. Over the course of five days of the Orientation Week, we focused on venture building, social impact, and formation by diving into the business model canvas, organizing a design thinking workshop by JoyCorps Studio (see pages 14-15), and doing a preliminary study of the Rhythm of Life, our formation-track workbook. We designed the Orientation Week to offer a holistic experience for our Fellows that included rest, nourishing meals, and recreation, all in the quaint setting of Dehradun, a city located in the foothills of the Himalayas. At the end of the Orientation Week, each Fellow had co-designed their Fellowship plan, where they had identified three business areas they would work on, during the program months.



A panel discussion during the Orientation Week

After the Orientation Week, the Fellowship proceeded with six months of program delivery, which was conducted virtually.

### May- October: Program Months

#### 50 hours of 1:1 check-in calls & continuous support via Whatsapp

Each Fellow was assigned a guide team comprising two members from JoyCorps. The guide teams were the Fellows' primary point of contact. Each month, the guide teams scheduled 1:1 check-in calls on Zoom, where we discussed the progress that Fellows had made in their Fellowship plan, the challenges, the wins, and next steps. The guide teams connected the Fellows to the contacts and resources needed to actualize their Fellowship plan. Through dedicated WhatsApp groups with each Fellow, the guide teams followed up on tasks that Fellows had undertaken as part of the Fellowship, celebrated the wins, and answered queries.

#### \$ 21,000 targeted support for venture growth

In 2024, we transitioned from direct capital placement to offering more targeted support to entrepreneurs. Each Fellow received a budget of USD 3,000 to underwrite professional consulting services tailored to their venture's growth needs, which amounted to a total outlay of USD 21,000.

The breakdown of services that Fellows chose for their ventures is as follows:

Finance	6.47%
Marketing	78.10%
Personal Development	3.65%
1:1 Mentoring from other entrepreneurs	5.43%
Team building	0.95%
Website services	5.6%

As seen in the table above, a bulk of the budget is used for branding and marketing, including brand assets, strategic marketing plans, website creation, etc. This is because JoyCorps Fellowship works with post-launch entrepreneurs. In this stage of business, our Fellows' focus is primarily on developing a growth strategy for their business, where marketing plays a big role.

#### 25 hours of workshops, 1:1 formational discussions, and community gathering

We conducted nine virtual workshops in 2024, some specifically for the 2024 Fellows only and others for our current Fellows and alumni. Each workshop had a speaker who was an expert in a topic or training relevant to entrepreneurs. The workshops were mainly built on understanding the 'why' behind the ventures our Fellows have started and then working to help them communicate this better.



### May and June: Workshops on 'The Why' (Part 1 and Part 2)

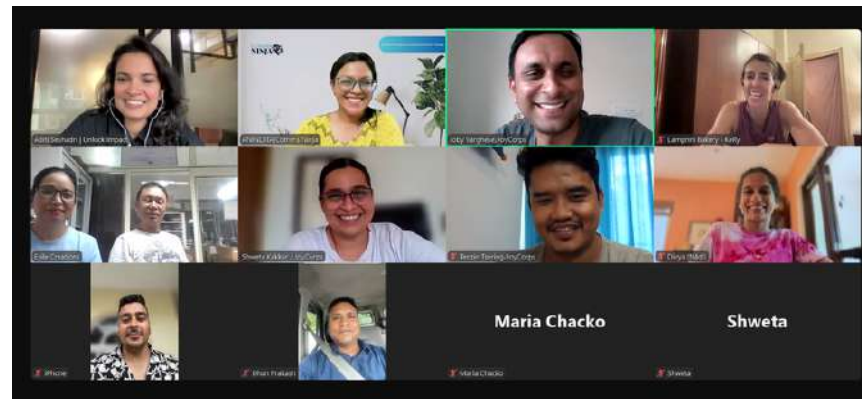
Entrepreneur Luke Gilbert conducted two 90-minute workshops on the topic, The Entrepreneur's Why, to help Fellows understand the core purpose of their ventures.

### July and August: Two workshops on Impact Communications

Comms Ninja, an impact communication agency, conducted two 90-minute workshops on Personal Branding and Impact Storytelling.

### September and October: 1:1 Coaching for Presentation & Pitch Perfect

In September, Comms Ninja built on previous sessions and provided personalized coaching to each Fellow to refine their business deck and presentation skills. In October, we hosted 'Pitch Perfect' with Comms Ninja. This was a simulated pitch event where our Fellows presented their pitch before their peers and a three-member panel. The group asked each Fellow questions about the venture and its social impact and gave feedback on the presentations.



A virtual workshop by Comms Ninja in progress

### Formation

We used a resource called Rhythms of Life to discuss six themes critical to entrepreneurship development: Mind, Body, Soul, Money, Influence, and Time. We created and shared recorded videos on each theme and followed up with 1:1 phone calls each month to discuss each theme with them.

*I found communicating and talking to my team quite helpful, as our business depends on our sales and services. The importance of maintaining body and mental health impacts these aspects of work.*

Ishaan, Founder- Beauties & Bros, speaking about Rhythms of Body



### Business Reimagined Summit November 2024 & Graduation

The JoyCorps Business Reimagined Summit 2024 was a wonderful gathering of small business owners, entrepreneurs, and thought leaders for three days of impactful discussions. The theme of the Summit was "The Role and Importance of Small Businesses in India." It emphasized the vital contribution of micro businesses to the Indian economy, providing a platform for insights, collaboration, and growth. The sessions fostered knowledge sharing and open dialogue with entrepreneurial leaders, subject matter experts, and entrepreneurs from India and surrounding countries. During the Summit, we held a graduation ceremony for our Fellows and celebrated our journey together.

*...I just want to say once again, working with you guys or having you guys even just as a sounding board is amazing. I have felt alone, lost a lot of times, but this is the first time I'm talking to people who are just geared to help me and are throwing their resources at me to find that help. So I am really grateful. Thank you so much.*

Divya, Founder- Nadi



JoyCorps fellows, team and guests at the Business Reimagined Summit 2024



A group discussion on financial planning

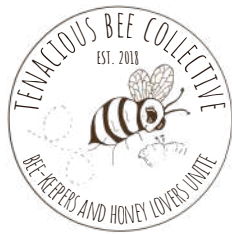


## ENTREPRENEUR FEATURE



**Kunal Singh**  
Co-Founder Tenacious Bee

This year, we are featuring Kunal Singh, a Fellow in JoyCorps' 2024 Fellowship cohort and co-founder of Tenacious Bee.



### About Tenacious Bee

Created in early 2018, Tenacious Bee Collective is a passion-driven initiative to bring raw, unpasteurized Himalayan honey to honey lovers. The business was founded to revive the dwindling bee population in Kunal's home province, the beautiful Himalayan state of Himachal Pradesh in north India, by reviving traditional beekeeping practices that are sustainable for farmers and kind to the bees.

### The Product:

Tenacious Bee sells premium, single-origin honey. The honey is named either after the region from which it is harvested or after the single source of flower that bees forage on. Interesting fact: bees practice "floral fidelity." If more than 40% of the foliage is a single flower variety in an area, the bees will forage on that flower only. Tenacious Bee focuses on sustainable honey harvests that do not harm bees. They promote traditional beekeeping practices, merging them with contemporary beekeeping developments. Tenacious Bee's rigorous beekeeping practices result in a deep and distinct flavor in their honey varieties. They also sell beeswax tapered and tealight candles and beeswax salves.



Tenacious Bee products on display at a fair

### The Problem

Beekeeping has long been a source of supplementary income for farmers in India. Traditional beekeeping practices in India were mindful of the welfare of bees. This is rapidly changing now. Beekeepers get low prices for their produce, so they must focus on the maximum output of each year's honey harvest rather than pursuing sustainable beekeeping practices. Furthermore, the widespread use of pesticides in farming is also causing the population of bees to dwindle alarmingly.



Tenacious Bee's artisanal Himalayan honey is now recognized globally. In 2024, their Bharmaur Honey won the **Best Tasting Creamed Honey in the World** award at the Black Jar contest



### The Solution

Tenacious Bee Collective runs a business solution to tackle this interconnected web of problems and protect bees and their natural ecosystem. First, they work closely with beekeepers and pay a premium for sustainably harvested honey. Second, they have built their brand around creative communication and marketing to share information about bees and their indispensable value to our ecology and environment. Finally, they sell exquisite honey they buy from beekeepers, which generates revenue for all their work. This honey is the focal point around which they have built their community of stakeholders.

[www.tenaciousbee.com](http://www.tenaciousbee.com)

@tenaciousbeehive



## On Entrepreneurship and Venture Building

Kunal thinks of himself as being adopted by the bees in 2017 when he first started learning about beekeeping by attending government-run training. Tenacious Bee has been growing steadily since its inception, both in terms of revenue and the scope of its work. In 2024, Tenacious Bee grew in revenue by 25%. Kunal feels good about the growth trajectory of his venture. He says he feels positive and hopeful. But the journey also comes with some stress. Today, the market is flooded with subpar "organic" honey. "It is very easy," Kunal says, "to get an organic certification just for the sake of it." With so many claims in the market and so many honey brands available to customers- often cheaper- how does Kunal deal with this stress?

**"We don't claim to be organic",**

Kunal says. "Unless the whole mountain is organic, honey can't be." Instead, they focus on honesty-ethically and scientifically harvested raw, unpasteurized honey backed by engaging storytelling and community outreach. Tenacious Bee's marketing on social media platforms and direct interactions with customers focus on sharing interesting stories about beekeeping, bees and their role in the ecosystem, flowers, etc. Kunal loves storytelling and believes in the power of stories to talk about topics like the conservation of bees, which he feels otherwise becomes very difficult for people to engage with. Kunal says they don't think of themselves as honey sellers but as beekeepers. They have built their brand consciously so that people now associate Tenacious Bee with authenticity.

Reflecting on his journey as an entrepreneur, Kunal says that he did not understand gratitude before Tenacious Bee. He feels deep appreciation when he sees like-minded people joining him on the journey of bee conservation and compounding its impact. "As an entrepreneur, I have learned that life becomes easier when we start feeling gratitude. For me, it is not about achieving quarterly or annual goals anymore. It is about living well every day as one moves towards the vision that one has for one's work."



## On Social Impact

Kunal's entrepreneurial journey with Tenacious Bee has taught him that the impact of his work is much bigger than him and his venture. While he can measure some of it by tracking the metrics of his venture, he cannot measure the significant part of it. Social impact metrics are challenging for Kunal because he does not consider social impact in terms of numbers or the long term. "I can only live in the moment, making sure that every day is meaningfully lived, partly because I have ADHD (he laughs) but partly because nature, life, and people are complex. I cannot do justice to tracking the impact of our work through numbers and reports, though I still do it."

So, how does Kunal think about the social impact of his work? First, Kunal remains closely connected to the community he built around Tenacious Bee. The women employed in the business are the first indicator of his social impact. When the women are deeply engaged with the company and its work, when they are laughing, or when Kunal overhears them talking about things they are planning with their next month's salary, he sees the impact of his work. Second, Tenacious Bee shows up at fairs and festivals all over the country as a way to engage with customers directly.



Kunal and Malini, co-founders of Tenacious Bee enjoying a day out in Himachal Pradesh



Tenacious Bee frequently sets up stalls in fairs and markets to interact with customers

Along with co-founder Malini, Kunal hosts 'honey tasting evenings,' ticketed events featuring appetizers and drinks developed by chefs using Tenacious Bee's honey and enjoyed amid enthralling stories of bees and the ecology. Seeing the joy of customers as they hear the stories of bees and nature and their expression of delight when they taste the honey is also where he sees the impact of his work. "Anyone who spends even a little time with us, if when they see flowers, they think of bees, that is my social impact. I hope to give people a new way of thinking about nature, bees, and ecology."





### On Formation

Kunal comes across as a very confident, self-assured entrepreneur, but he shares that this is not the case. "At least twice daily, I feel like a fraud," he laughs. When people reach out to him as an expert beekeeper, to interview him, or to invite him to speak at an event, he often struggles with whether he is worth somebody's time and interest.



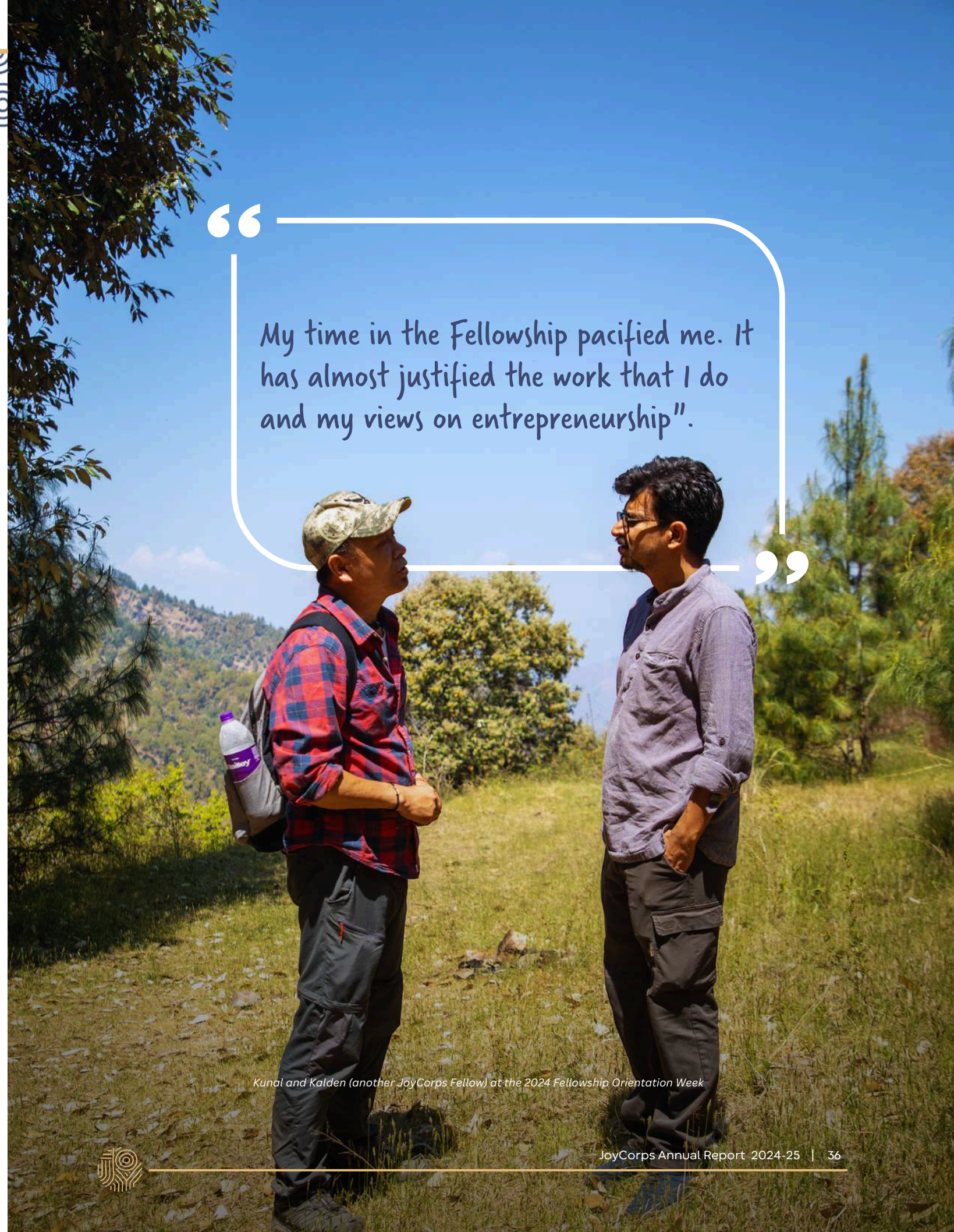
*Kunal conducted a honey tasting event at Orientation Week*

This remark leads to his time at JoyCorps Fellowship. Kunal says that it was a deeply satisfying experience. He built very good relationships with his peers and with the JoyCorps team. "My time in the Fellowship pacified me. It has almost justified the work that I do and my views on entrepreneurship". He says the Fellowship renewed his inspiration in his vision. He does not feel alone, adding that when entrepreneurs think they are not alone, they feel satiated. "We entrepreneurs, we keep pulling ourselves down, and so I feel we need others to pull us up and JoyCorps Fellowship is where I have found this.

### Ways to support Kunal & Tenacious Bee

Kunal does not seek to grow Tenacious Bee very quickly. He is trying to develop the venture slowly and consistently. "The only thing that happens quickly in nature is destruction," he says. Currently, Kunal is seeking support in the following initiatives:

- 1.Exploring global markets:** Kunal needs advice about the required certifications to export his beeswax products to global markets. Kunal is also seeking advice on trade fairs through which he can take his honey and beeswax products to retailers.
- 2.The Mobile Apiary Project:** This is a first-of-its-kind 16-ton truck designed for the Indian Western Himalayas. It integrates beekeeping, mobile honey harvesting, and community education in one powerful platform. The customized vehicle will optimize honey production by moving hives across flowering zones and enable on-site extraction in hygienic, semi-mechanized conditions. It will pioneer a replicable model for mountain-based beekeeping enterprises. For more details contact [shweta@joycorps.org](mailto:shweta@joycorps.org)



“My time in the Fellowship pacified me. It has almost justified the work that I do and my views on entrepreneurship”.

*Kunal and Kalden (another JoyCorps Fellow) at the 2024 Fellowship Orientation Week*



## FELLOWSHIP: OUR JOURNEY FROM 2019-2024

JoyCorps has run four Fellowship cohorts since 2019:

Aug 2019-Oct 2021: Cohort 1 (2-year Fellowship model)

May 2020- April 2022: Cohort 2 (2-year Fellowship model)

May 2022- April 2024: Cohort 3 (2-year Fellowship model)

April 2024- November 2024: Cohort 4 (8-month Fellowship model)

Since its inception in 2019, the JoyCorps Fellowship has supported 34 Fellows from 26 ventures. Of these, 82% are based in India, 12% in Thailand, and 3% each in Sri Lanka and Nepal. As of 2024, we remain in contact with 29 Fellows representing 22 ventures. Following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, JoyCorps ceased its direct operations in Thailand. Between 2020 and 2022, our Thai Fellows continued to engage with the Fellowship through our partner organization, Ton Cedar, which administered the program under a JoyCorps- funded affiliate model. This partnership concluded amicably in 2023, and we have since discontinued tracking data from Thai alumni. Two ventures in India have disengaged from JoyCorps—one due to personal health challenges, and the other for other personal reasons.

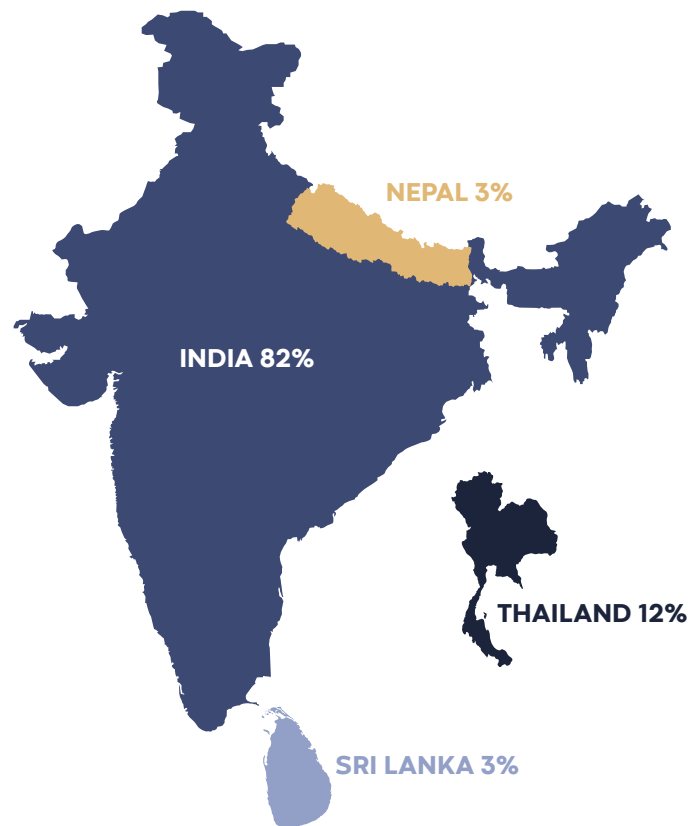


Illustration 1: Geographical location of JoyCorps fellows

The data in the following sections is from Fellows who are still associated with JoyCorps.

## SURVIVAL RATE

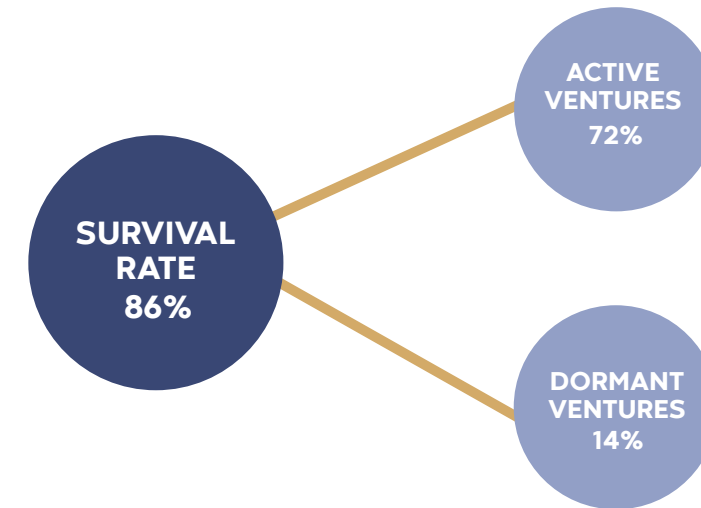


Illustration 2: Survival rate among ventures still associated with JoyCorps

We define “active ventures” as those that are running daily business operations. On the other hand, “dormant ventures” are temporarily on hold or operating at minimum capacity due to the founders' current life priorities—such as a new mother scaling back to care for her child, or an entrepreneur readjusting to life in the U.S. after a decade in India. While currently paused, all of these ventures intend to resume growth in the future.

## REVENUE & INDUSTRY

**Total revenue from ventures in our portfolio: \$11,19,521**

**Fellows with sustained or growing revenues: 85%**

The year 2024 marked a period of significant momentum. Many entrepreneurs, after years of groundwork—developing systems, refining business models, and building infrastructure—are now beginning to scale. Approximately 50% of our ventures have seen revenue increases of 4x to 6x.

This growth translates into meaningful economic impact, including job creation and deeper engagement in their local communities. At the same time, a number of ventures remain in earlier stages—testing new ideas, pivoting from original models, and striving for market fit. JoyCorps Fellowship continues to support these entrepreneurs in their process of discovery and evolution.



### Business Model Distribution

B2B & D2C both: 39%

B2B only: 23%

D2C only: 31%

**Note:** The remaining 7% are in the pre-operational stage of their venture and are not generating revenue through sales

### Markets

Domestic, local: 50%

Domestic, pan-country: 37%

Export: 13%

## SOCIAL IMPACT

**Total jobs sustained: 228, new jobs created: 41**

Our ventures created 41 new jobs in 2024, of which 31 were full-time, and the remaining seasonal jobs. Fast-growth ventures added more year-round roles, agri-based ventures created seasonal jobs, and steady-growth ventures added fewer full-time roles at a consistent pace.

**Family & Community Impact: 422**

In 2024, community impact grew significantly as many of our businesses thrived. Jobs in rural and hill areas bring prosperity to typically larger households (relative to urban areas). Seasonal work, buying from marginal farmers, and providing supplementary income have had a positive effect on local communities.

**On-site training & skill development: 96 employees trained**

Many of our ventures are based in small cities and rural areas, where skilled labor is scarce. As a result, a significant number of our Fellows offer onsite job training, covering areas such as machinery operation, fabrication, quality control, customer service, and leadership.



Illustration 3: Social impact areas our Fellows work in

## OUR PORTFOLIO

### FOOD & BEVERAGES



**ATMOSPHERE STUDIO**  
Kombucha, Vegan and gluten free desserts, Vegan and gluten free savoury snacks, Electrolytes



**LAMPRINI**  
Desserts and granola



**ONE FIELD**  
Organic produce direct from farm, bakery and restaurant

### AGRICULTURE: ALLIED



**TENACIOUS BEE COLLECTIVE**  
Raw, unpasteurized honey, and beeswax products



**GRACE DAIRY**  
Packaged milk and milk products

### SERVICES



**BEAUTIES & BROS**  
A chain of hair salons



**VETS ON CALL**  
App-based last-mile veterinary services

### AGRICULTURE & FOOD PROCESSING



**HIMALAYAN HAAT**  
Organic and small batch jams, chutneys, coolers from produce grown on the farm and processed onsite



**CHOUDHARY MILLS**  
Various flours and masalas, ground fresh



**MOUNTSRIBE**  
Speciality coffee, exotic fruit produce (dragonfruit, avocado)



**THE GOOD OCEAN**  
Indian indigenous seaweed varieties





## FASHION & TEXTILES



### RUAS

Embroidered straps for bags and cameras



### J&M

Block printed cotton and leather bags



### NOOR

Kashmiri Papier Mache products- jewelry, home ,and Christmas decor



### KHASPA

Macrame home decor products



### DIPRI MRINALINI

Natural dyes and textiles



### BEYOND HANDMADE

Whitelabelled fashion goods manufacturing



### BEYOND HANDMADE

Slow fashion, custom clothing, and capsule wardrobes



### EXILE CREATIONS

Jewelry featuring glass beads made from Italian Murano glass

## REFLECTIONS FROM THE FELLOWSHIP TEAM

### A year of listening | Tenzin Tsering

Tenzin shares his reflections on being a part of the Fellowship team and working with entrepreneurs.

My involvement with the Fellowship program began with a focus on event logistics, specifically coordinating transportation for our Fellows attending The JoyCorps Business Reimagined Summit. Over time, I started attending the Fellowship's design and structure meetings. These discussions helped me gain more clarity on the importance of what the JoyCorps Fellowship does.

Then, last year, I started shadowing a senior team member from the fellowship program during the monthly guide check-in with Fellows. These sessions involved a lot of listening to entrepreneurs from different business sectors and with varying lengths of business experience. From listening to these conversations, I came to realize that regardless of which industry a business is operating in, a robust foundation based on a well-thought-out business model is essential. But even beyond that, I realized that what really separates a sustainable and meaningful venture from others is pinpoint clarity about who the business is meant to serve. This clarity guides an entrepreneur towards more intentional, purpose-driven work with a lot more joy and passion and ample space to use their energies for self-care. Self-care, I think, is very important for individuals venturing out into solving a problem for a community or the world at large.

With this learning, I have also come to understand better the strength of our JoyCorps Fellowship program design, where we focus on venture building but also give equal importance to cultivating a strong understanding of the social impact and helping the entrepreneur's growth not just as a leader but also as a holistic individual. And though we are not there yet, my push will continue to be towards creating robust systems to capture, monitor, and analyze growth in these three areas of focus.

### Ventures as indicators of a country's health | Shalem Kallimel

Shalem joined JoyCorps in 2025, after being associated with us as event coordinator for many events. He talks about entrepreneurship and his aspirations in his new role at JoyCorps,

Ventures are an interesting indicator of the health of a country. The presence of start-ups across various industries portrays a steady and healthy economic rise that will benefit the state. And the lack of them shows the opposite. Start-ups from various industries also serve as a tool for shaping culture and add to the existing perspective on how life is lived.

JoyCorps' strong emphasis on venture-building, combined with an equal emphasis on personal formation and social impact, makes it an exciting place to be in. The opportunity to interact and walk alongside entrepreneurs who want to grow an impactful business is truly a huge privilege. That is a brave call, they are to be cheered on, to be applauded!

My hope and excitement is to be able to work alongside the Joyful JoyCorps team in being a strong support for entrepreneurs out there who in spite of all the unpleasant challenges (many not having a business background) are making an impact one day at a time. What joy to see start-ups flourishing, thereby contributing to the economic development of the country.



JoyCorps team members Shalem, Tenzin, Maria at the Business Reimagined Summit 2024



# JoyCorps Ecosystem

Dear friends,

Since 2022, I have had the great honor of working with leaders of entrepreneurial ecosystems in different cities in India. These cities are leading the way for entrepreneurship to grow, and their ecosystems are thriving. Sam and I spent the last three years building these relationships, and we learned much about the cities' needs to further entrepreneurship. One of the primary requests the leaders made to JoyCorps was to design a program for concept or early-stage entrepreneurs. I am proud to say that three years down the road, our team has built a robust offering to meet this need through our JoyCorps Aspire program. My passion is serving the vision of city ecosystem leaders in India. I am confident that, with the support of our partners and well-wishers, we will achieve excellence in this endeavor.



**Joby Varghese**  
Lead of JoyCorps Ecosystem

In the subsequent pages, I am excited to share with you all the work that we have done to build our JoyCorps Aspire program, introduce you to our growing team and the facilitators who will run Aspire in different cities across India, and share with you our plans to launch Aspire in a big way from 2025 onward.

## JOYCORPS ECOSYSTEM: OUR WHY

The vision for JoyCorps Ecosystem is to support city-based entrepreneurial ecosystems and help ecosystem builders with training and other relevant services. This vision has emerged through our partnership with leaders who have created thriving entrepreneurial ecosystems in their cities. JoyCorps Ecosystem seeks to embed itself in these existing ecosystems and strengthen them by bringing our experience in high-quality training built on our three areas of focus- venture building, social impact, and holistic formation.

Presently, we are focusing on providing support for concept-stage entrepreneurs through JoyCorps Aspire. This in-person training helps young entrepreneurs build scalable business models while integrating value-based practices into their businesses. Gradually, we also want to bring in coaching and consultancy to expand our scope of services that entrepreneurs may need as they advance in their entrepreneurial journey. We started our work in two of the biggest cities in India, Mumbai and Delhi. Now, we are growing into tier-two cities, smaller than metropolitan cities but infrastructurally quite developed.



*Joby Varghese speaking at a recent event for entrepreneurs from Dehradun*



## HOW WE STARTED

In 2023, the newly formed 'ecosystem' team piloted an online concept-stage program for aspiring entrepreneurs, i.e., individuals with a new business idea and little to no prior business experience. Before this, JoyCorps' only offering for entrepreneurship development was the Fellowship program, which was designed for entrepreneurs already operating functional businesses with a growth-oriented mindset.

The JoyCorps team felt the need for a concept stage program to widen our engagement with the nascent entrepreneurial movement in India. This need was also echoed in Sam and Joby's interactions with Indian entrepreneurs and ecosystem leaders across various cities. Our 2023 pilot was called 'Concept to Launch'.



Stock Photo

It aimed to address challenges such as the lack of business acumen, founder isolation, and inadequate financial planning skills, all of which are proven to be the main reasons businesses fail. The program consisted of nine modules and was conducted virtually through a community learning portal called Mighty Networks. We offered a fortnightly Zoom session for the participants to hear from successful businesses and also their peers on each of the nine modules. The 2023 cohort consisted of aspiring entrepreneurs whose ideas were in sectors like ed-tech, business services, restaurants, and clothing, among others.

The pilot was more successful than we anticipated and it further showed us the need for a concept stage program. However, as most online courses do, we found it to have some shortcomings, specifically that the relationship part was difficult online. We gained other valuable insights about the changes we needed to make in the structure of the program. First, the 5-month duration of the program proved to be a long commitment for entrepreneurs. Second, we recognized that we had to change the mode of learning from virtual to in-person to address the lack of community our pilot batch was feeling. With these learnings, the best course forward was offering the concept stage program in person and through collaboration with city-based partners. Rather than JoyCorps being in full control at a distance and therefore not always knowing the on-ground needs, a more efficient model was offering our programs within existing entrepreneurial ecosystems in cities.

## OUR JOURNEY WITH THE ASPIRE PROGRAM DESIGN



The Aspire program design was developed in consultations with ecosystem leaders across India

In 2024, the Ecosystem team began formalizing our conversations with city leaders. We also partnered with other global Entrepreneur Support Organizations that run similar in-person programs, giving the Ecosystem team more tools and training to design 'JoyCorps Aspire.' With this city-based cohort model, JoyCorps is now offering city leaders a structured concept-stage program while giving them the space to appropriate the context to each cohort. For example, our Patna cohort offers training in both Hindi/English, while other cities prefer only English. Some cohorts, such as Mumbai and Delhi, are considering transit restrictions and, therefore, may do a hybrid model (online and in-person) on certain weeks while maintaining in-person for most of the meetings.

An essential part of Aspire is working with a team of one facilitator and one administrator from each city to deploy it. We worked with each city for three to four months, creating a job description for the facilitator and administrator. We built the job description focusing on skills and, equally importantly, on the candidate's heart. For example, the facilitator does not have to come from an entrepreneurial background, but must love the entrepreneurship space. Furthermore, the facilitator needs to have some business acumen, be relational, and, most importantly, be willing to journey with entrepreneurs.





Now, the question for us was: Where do we find these facilitators, and how? Using our network, we requested the city leaders to refer a few potential facilitators based on the aforementioned criteria. We also introduced city leaders to our Aspire 'Training of Trainers' (Facilitators) program that we designed with the following goals: 1) to introduce prospective facilitators to the curriculum, 2) get their feedback, and 3) see the facilitation style, personality, and motivation of prospective facilitators. At the end of the two trainings, we would select the most suitable candidates to become Aspire Facilitators. Six city leaders answered our request and sent their recommended candidates to the training. The first training was in Kochi, with six attending from south India, and the second was in Delhi, with 15 participants. These two cities meet a basic need: Kochi is easy for southern Indians to access, and the same is true for northerners and Delhi. (See the following few pages for more details about our two Aspire Training the Trainers.)

## ASPIRE TRAINING OF TRAINERS (ToT)

In January and February 2025, we were finally ready to host the Aspire Training of Trainers (ToT). Following our learnings from 2023, we wanted an in-person Aspire TOT that provided relational aspects and side conversations that rarely happen online.

Each ToT was an intensive two-day training with a skilled facilitator, Sylvie, guiding the time. The two-day time constraint was put in place because most of these prospective facilitators were traveling, away from family, and taking leave from their jobs. Even so, the short time lent so much value and insight for the JoyCorps team to gauge who would make a great future facilitator. Aspire TOT was packed with role-plays as an interactive method for them to understand the concept. This format allowed each participant to engage with the curriculum in their own way and the chance to hear feedback from other facilitators. The Aspire TOT provided a space for them to be well-equipped and ready to facilitate a cohort of concept-stage entrepreneurs. One of the participants wrote about this training, "I enjoyed the fact that everybody took the role of facilitator. It helped me to understand people with different perspectives as opposed to mine." At the end of the two ToTs, we shortlisted the candidates who would make good facilitators. They were very skilled and were keen to work with us. They had also already bought into the ethos and values. Ultimately, after much deliberation and consideration, the JoyCorps team chose six Aspire facilitators from the two Aspire TOTs.

In the next section, we are pleased to introduce the JoyCorps Aspire Facilitators. We are excited to work with them in 2025 to run Aspire programs in cities across India!

## MEET THE ASPIRE FACILITATORS!

Our Aspire facilitators are from all different backgrounds and experiences. Representing 6 different cities across India, JoyCorps is delighted to have them spearheading our Aspire trainings.



### Sajan Titus, New Delhi.

With over two decades of cross-sector experience, Sajan currently leads Operations at Shikhar Microfinance. He has a heart for transformation and is passionate about building people and developing character, skills, and purpose through his work.



### Stephy Stephan, Kochi

Stephy is a mental health coach and founder of Swathman Foundation, supporting emotional healing and resilience. She specializes in sports psychology, works with elite athletes, and serves as faculty at CMC Vellore, training future mental health professionals.



### Kelly Dwyer, Kolkata

Originally from Chicago, Kelly has lived in Kolkata since 2016. She empowers women through Lamprini Hospitality, the bakery and training program she started for survivors of gender violence. Her influence lies in equipping women to live with dignity, purpose, and strength.



### Daniel Smith, Patna

Raised in Patna, Daniel leads IT and communications at Bienestar Solutions Pvt. Ltd. He feels called to mentor young entrepreneurs and drive innovation in Bihar. His work blends tech, marketing, and a deep commitment to equipping future leaders.



### Sarah Bernal, Dehradun

Sarah has 15+ years of global experience in social work and teaching. She is always eager to learn new languages, discover more about different cultures, and education around the world. Therefore, one of her strengths is finding new ways to train and inspire others through her work at JoyCorps.



### Valance Quadros, Mumbai

Valance is a business and finance strategist with 25+ years across banking, consulting, and entrepreneurship. A Chartered Accountant known for his integrity and insight, he helps founders build sustainable, value-driven businesses. He believes good business begins with wise stewardship and purposeful design.





## ASPIRE LAUNCH PLAN 2025

The JoyCorps Aspire Program curriculum is designed to help participants organize their ideas on a business model canvas, identify the benefits of their ideas to their customers, and break down revenue streams and cost structures. A discussion-based format allows participants to fine-tune and share their ideas while learning from other entrepreneurs in their cohort and the facilitator. The curriculum is tailored with local case studies that explore challenges they will likely face, lessons from established entrepreneurs who will be guest speakers and resources for the formational journey of concept-stage entrepreneurs.

In each city, the Aspire Program will be held once every week, with the day and time scheduled according to the availability of the cohort members and facilitator. While each session will be 3.5 hours long, entrepreneurs should expect to spend 6 - 8 hours per week on each module and fieldwork. The program ends with a celebration and pitch event (module 9), where participants will receive their graduation certificates. They will also have the opportunity to share their business model with the city ecosystem leaders, potential mentors, and investors.

Our team aims to generate thriving scalable business models in different cities in India to serve the vision of the city ecosystems. We will achieve this by running multiple Aspire programs in each city. We will also journey with those program graduates who show an intent for venture growth.

As mentioned, JoyCorps has selected six facilitators from Delhi, Mumbai, Patna, Kochi, Kolkata, and Dehradun to launch Aspire in 2025. These facilitators will be supported by city-based administrators. The JoyCorps Aspire Team and Aspire Facilitators are currently forming Launch Teams in each city. The Launch Teams comprise established entrepreneurial leaders in the city who will promote the Aspire program.

For 2025, our goal is that 80% of the participants in the JoyCorps Aspire program will have developed:

- **A robust business model by the end of the program (with particular emphasis on customer development).**
- **Can successfully articulate their model at the end of the program.**
- **Have developed a 90-day execution plan that moves them forward in critical business model areas.**

## WHAT WE LEARNED IN 2024, THE ASPIRE TEAM

As we launch Aspire, we launch a new group of four team members who will form the JoyCorps Aspire Team. 2024 was a true learning curve for Sharon and Sarah, as it was the year they both joined JoyCorps. Liris Thomas joined us in April 2025. Through working together, we recognize all the ways we complement each other. Not only that, but we are growing together to make this new program come to fruition. Here are some of our thoughts on entrepreneurial development as well as our learnings from this past year:

### Liris Thomas

I've worked in the development sector, often holding onto the familiar vision: "Don't give a person a fish that feeds them for a day. Teach them to fish, and you feed them for a lifetime." But over time, I've come to see how the "teaching" part—often wrapped in the language of "empowerment"—rarely lives up to its promise. Many end up in jobs that strip away joy, offering survival but not purpose. That disconnect has led me into a season of unlearning at JoyCorps. Here, I'm discovering that true empowerment looks different: it's not just about teaching skills but creating space for people to pursue their dreams. In this light, entrepreneurship development becomes the parted sea—the difficult, uncertain road leading to lasting transformation. JoyCorps helps me see that when people launch their products, rooted in their passion and vision, it has the power to build not just livelihoods but thriving communities.

### Sharon Abraham

I joined the JoyCorps Ecosystem team in July 2024, when the Aspire program was still in development. As a small team, we were figuring out how to introduce the program in partnership with other capacity builders with similar concept stage programs in different cultural contexts. My team lead was incredibly supportive, giving me the opportunity to learn InDesign and adapt the program from the Kenyan to the Indian context - a challenging but rewarding process that took several months. There was plenty of space to learn, grow, and improve, and I deeply value being part of a team that not only cares about the work but also about each individual. JoyCorps' values are consistently reflected in our meetings, where people are just as important as the mission.

### Sarah

The juxtaposition of strength and tender-heartedness in JoyCorps astounds me. After hearing the entrepreneurs at the Business Reimagined Summit last autumn, I remember being motivated to start a transformational business myself. I came home telling my husband, "We should start a business and hire survivors of human trafficking . . . Let's have bees in our yard!", and from there the conversation continued about empowering women and cultivating change through ventures. Listening to JoyCorps' business





partners in other programs as well, these down-to-earth people, some of whom openly say that they are not qualified to do what they are doing, but they are doing it, inspire others to move and transform their community. I am honored to be a part of Aspire, where we get to point budding entrepreneurs in the direction they want to go, giving them tools to get things started and cheering them on when they launch. In my year working with JoyCorps, I know I have only scratched the surface of what JoyCorp partners do. There is blood, sweat, and tears. It is a constant battle on so many levels. But the perseverance of these entrepreneurs and their pushing forward in the midst of so many obstacles is commendable. Within this, their merciful heart towards others is astounding.



(L-R) JoyCorps ED Sam with Ecosystem team members Joby, Sarah, and Sharon



**At JoyCorps Ecosystem,**  
we care deeply about creating an environment of support and resources for entrepreneurs who are just starting their journey. If you'd be interested in partnering with JoyCorps Ecosystem, we would love to connect and share further details.  
Contact [joby@joycorps.org](mailto:joby@joycorps.org)



# JoyCorps Team



**ASHA MATHEW** serves as Senior Research Associate for the JoyCorps Studio. She holds a PhD in International Relations, and her research interests include understanding democratic structures and the incorporation of minorities. She currently lives in Dehradun, India



**ERICA D'SOUZA** is a Senior Associate at the JoyCorps Studio. She loves working with data and helping people see the importance of it. She also loves understanding how processes and systems work and how they can be improved. She lives with her husband, two cats, and a dog in Mumbai, India.



**SAM PARAKKAL** is our Executive Director. He grew up in the Arabian Gulf, earned a business degree in the US, and spent a decade gaining experience in business processes. He began coaching JoyCorps Fellows in India in 2018 and became E.D. in 2021. Sam lives in Dehradun, India with his wife and their two daughters.



**SARAH BERNAL** serves as Coordinator for Ecosystem programs. She is dedicated to and has worked in social work for over 15 years. Passionate about cultures and languages, she thrives in new contexts. Currently, she resides in Dehradun, India, with her husband, two daughters, and three lively dogs



**JOBY VARGHESE** is the Lead of Fellowship & Ecosystem. He grew up in South India and has worked in various leadership roles for over two decades. He studied leadership in the US, where he helped with strategy development for a cross-cultural team. Joby lives in Dehradun, India, with his wife, Rhema, and their two daughters.



**JOSIE MACKENZIE** serves as the Lead of the JoyCorps Studio, where she works with clients to create entrepreneurial solutions that are contextually appropriate. She has a Master's degree in Design Thinking. She lives in Ireland.



**SHALEM KALLIMEL** steps in as Coordinator, Fellowship for JoyCorps. Having roots in South India, Shalem has lived mostly in North India, and is married to Kim, from the Northeast. His multi-cultural background, along with his passion to see people thrive and flourish, helps him easily adapt and be flexible. Shalem lives in Dehradun, India, with his wife and their three boys.



**SHWETA KAKKAR** is the Lead of Operations and Communication. She holds a postgraduate degree in Development Studies and an undergraduate degree in Business Studies. Shweta is skilled in operations management, cross-cultural communication, and program management. She lives with her husband and their two dogs in Dehradun, India.



**LIRIS THOMAS** is the Coordinator for the Aspire Program. Growing up in Delhi, he has always been passionate about creating opportunities for people to thrive. With years of experience working on projects that empower those in need, Liris believes in the power of communities to drive meaningful change. Outside of work, Liris enjoys riding his motorcycle and filling his home with plants. He lives in Trivandrum, India with his wife, two daughters, and a few stray cats that frequently visit.



**NIKHIL DWARKA** serves as Senior Associate of Community Development, developing and managing our community support initiatives in India. He has spent many years as a mentor for young Tibetan men and women with backgrounds of addiction. Nikhil lives with his wife and their daughter in Dehradun, India.



**SHARON ABRAHAM** is the JoyCorps Ecosystems Administrator. She oversees support for early-stage entrepreneurs and manages the administrative operations of training programs and courses offered by JoyCorps. She lives in Dehradun with her husband and three daughters.



**TENZIN TSERING** is our Senior Associate for Fellowship. A Tibetan born and raised in northern India, Tenzin is guided by a commitment to purposeful work and continuous growth. He supports the fellowship through program coordination, systems thinking, and backend operations. He lives in Dehradun with his wife, their daughter, and their dog, Buddy.



# JoyCorps Board



**DR. KRISTEN WILLARD** is an economist who holds a Ph.D. and an M.A. in Economics from Princeton University. She taught microeconomics for ten years, spent ten years in litigation consulting, and has traveled extensively to Asia to serve and teach. She has served on JoyCorps' board since 2019 and as its chairman since 2020.



**HENRY HO** is the CSO and Co-Founder of Field Agent and spent 19 years at Procter & Gamble, in both the US and Asia. He has been a part of multiple start-ups and helped to start or support several Multiple Bottom Line businesses in Asia. Henry has a B.S. from Furman University and has served on the JoyCorps board since 2016.



**DEMI LLOYD** is co-founder and owner of DEMDACO, a wholesale gift company, and RedRock Traditions, a direct selling company. She is committed to the idea that business is first and foremost a human endeavor. She was previously CEO of House of Lloyd and has served on the JoyCorps board since 2020.



**DAVE MURRAY**, our Co-Founder and Director of Development, has been working with ventures in Asia for 20 years. In 2011 he founded a guitar business in India, and while there, co-founded JoyCorps to support the community. He manages our partner relationships and creates content. Dave lives with his wife and two sons in New York



**SAM PARAKKAL**, is our Executive Director. He grew up in the Arabian Gulf, earned a business degree in the US and spent a decade gaining experience in manufacturing, business process & organizational development. He began coaching JoyCorps Fellows in India in 2018 and became E.D. in 2021. Sam lives in north India with his wife and two daughters.