

My Leadership Development at Meridian

Hajira
Khan

Over the past few years, I have learned that it is impossible to achieve your goals, realize your dreams or understand where you are going in your journey without help. In my pursuit of poverty alleviation, I started volunteering at the age of 18 and ever since I have been volunteering with organizations around the world in various capacities. I am now playing a role in the further development of my home country Pakistan, none of which would be possible without the people, governments, and organizations that invested in my professional development and skills acquisition.



The Meridian team volunteering on Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

One of the most crucial opportunities of my early career came through U.S. Embassy Pakistan/ Department of State when after the year-long application process, I joined Meridian as an Atlas Corps Fellow. My Fellowship at Meridian was very exciting as I got the opportunity to work across divisions on programs focusing on causes that I am most passionate about like youth development, leadership, community engagement, and action planning. The most important part of my Fellowship journey at Meridian was connecting the dots from my past and realizing that I have always wanted to help young people build their capacities to make a difference in their communities. During the Fellowship I was able to bring together my experiences and knowledge to develop curricula and training workshops that I developed on leadership and social action. These training programs are still used for Meridian's programs such as the [Iraqi Young Leaders Exchange Program \(IYLEP\)](#), which bring 100 Iraqis to the United States every year. Another very exciting project that I worked on was the development and implementation of Meridian's first virtual exchange: Everyday Heroes.



Meridian's IYLEP team brainstorms ideas in the Linden Grove.

I have been back in Pakistan for nearly a year now. Since returning, I have been working as a Program Manager at [Amal Academy](#) which is a Stanford University and Acumen Fund venture, and very involved as the Advisory Board Member of [Queen's Young Leaders](#), a program of The Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust. One of the big tasks as the Advisory Board Member was the selection of 60 award winners from around the Commonwealth. These winners are exceptional young leaders who are changing their communities with their innovative action projects. During the Residential Week, where the Award winners received their awards from Her Majesty The Queen (and I also had the privilege of meeting HRH briefly and David Beckham) at the Buckingham Palace, I was involved in training sessions at University of Cambridge focused on identifying resources and fundraising for the projects' implementation. As a Program Manager at Amal, so far I have managed around 4 rounds of the Career-Prep Fellowship, which is a 3 month program that helps young people identify their dreams and develop employability skills. Through my work, I have prepared over 100 Amal Fellows and the groups' impact continues to multiply.



Meeting Her Royal Highness at Buckingham Palace.

I have been involved in a lot of exciting projects and ventures thus far in my career, and my Fellowship at Meridian has played a really big role in preparing me. I am very grateful to all the organizations (U.S. Embassy, State Department & Atlas Corps), supervisors, mentors, and colleagues for this life changing opportunity!



I got to meet David Beckham!