

MURCS COHORT 2022 BIOGRAPHIES

Shabaz Khan is a Climate Change and Disaster Resilience Expert from India, with seven years of hands-on and progressive experience in the Urban Resilience. He has a demonstrated track record of excellence in project management, implementation, and coordination skills, as evident in his work with several reputable organizations, including UNICEF, GIZ, and RedR India, across three South Asian countries, namely **India, Nepal, and Bangladesh.** His expertise includes climate change adaptation and mitigation, sustainable urban development, disaster risk reduction, and humanitarian response. In addition, he is well-versed in digital innovation, agile methodologies (design thinking), proposal development, stakeholder management, and knowledge management. In his most recent role as a Technical Advisor at GIZ India's sustainable urban industrial development cluster, he was engaged in multiple **global, regional, and national level projects related to sustainable urban development** through climate change adaptation and mitigation, disaster resilience, digital innovation, and climate financing.



Shabaz Khan has a **master's degree in Disaster Management** from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, India and a **bachelor's degree in Geography (Honors)** from Aligarh Muslim University in Uttar Pradesh, India. In addition, in 2019, he was also awarded the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation **Fellowship for a postgraduate diploma program on Disaster Resilience Leadership—Urban Risk Resilience.**

His motivation for joining MURCS is to enhance his knowledge of urban development and management, develop a global perspective on urban sustainability, get acquainted with anticipatory, innovative, and implementable solutions for climate change adaptation and mitigation, including nature-based solutions to strengthen urban resilience, and hone his professional and leadership skills to grow as an urban development management professional.

Josua Steffan grew up in a small village in **southern Germany.**

From a young age, nature, environment, and society played an important role in his life. After finishing his degree in Geoinformation management he began working as a **GIS coordinator** in the city planning office of the City of Fellbach (Germany). Topics worked on like urban digital twin, 3D visualisation, or interactive urban planning convinced him to deepen his knowledge and learn more about sustainable urban planning. Josua developed an indoor navigation application in his bachelor thesis at a school for blind and visually impaired people. Thus, his motivation of integrating technology solutions to help others rose. MURCS is the perfect degree to combine technology and science to tackle the practical issues of future cities. Climate change will affect all our lives and must be taken into account above all in urban planning to ensure the quality of life of future generations.



City planner Derartu Dendena hails from **the Ethiopian capital of**

Addis Ababa. She began working on the Addis Ababa master plan immediately after receiving her degree from Addis Ababa University in 2015. Once the first stages of the city design were completed, she was elevated to the position of land use modification and regulation specialist in the project office. In 2020, she enrolled at the University of Seoul's International School of Urban Sciences to pursue a master's degree in urban administration and planning. She worked well with others and took the initiative in both of her previous majors. She has attended several conventions, both domestic and international.

working together with researchers from all over the globe to address local issues. She has been awarded a credential as an international consultant by the local government and university in Seoul for her outstanding work. She used these strengths to take first place in two global project development competitions at the University of Seoul. As an undergrad and a grad, she held the position of class representative. She was able to demonstrate her leadership abilities by serving as secretary of the student council. For the WGA project Africa, created with the help of the Danish government and the EiABC housing organization in Addis Ababa, she acted as a design charette facilitator and interpreter (design conversation and presentation on stormwater management with the direct beneficiaries). Adding sustainability as a primary motivator in fostering urban harmony was a major motivation for her to enroll in this program and become a holistic practitioner in the sector.



Ankur Negi is a **Disaster Risk professional from India** with just **over three and half years of experience** with NGOs and academic and public sector entities. Starting as an engineer, Ankur switched to the field of disaster management and has an MSc in Disaster Management from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, a premier social sciences institute in India. Ankur worked as a Smart Cities Fellow with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India which exposed him to the field of urban resilience, which deepened his interest in urban studies and MURCS. As a fellow, he dealt with urban issues firsthand in different urban geographies across India and this experience shaped his thoughts on the need for sustainable



planning as a means to mitigate climate change impacts. Ankur also has a diploma from the Indian Institute of Remote Sensing, ISRO in Remote Sensing and GIS technologies and is proficient in their use and applicability in different research areas. The MURCS programme is thus an opportunity for him to understand the urban domain, its complexities, and different perspectives and build upon his previous knowledge and experiences through interdisciplinary learning from peers and professionals alike. For recreation, Ankur has a strong appreciation for nature and loves hiking, music and capturing natural beauty through his camera lens.

Behruz Uzoqov is an environmental engineer from Dushanbe, **Tajikistan**. After completing South Kazakhstan State University in 2010, he worked as a Monitoring Specialist at the **Committee for Environmental Protection of Tajikistan**. Later, in 2012, he was hired by the **Embassy of Japan in Tajikistan** for the position of Grant Aid Projects Coordinator. In 2016, he joined the **Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)**, one of the largest international organizations in the world, in the position of Assistant Program Officer. He was promoted to higher positions two times during his working career at JICA Tajikistan Office. As a Program Officer, his main duties included, but were not limited to, the overall coordination of environmental, energy, tourism, and education projects. While working at the JICA, he studied **Economics** at the **Tajik-Russian Slavonic University (RTSU)** and graduated in 2022. In the same year, he participated in and won an **Erasmus Mundus Program Scholarship** to pursue a **Master's Degree** in Urban Climate and Sustainability in the United Kingdom and European universities.



Rosalynd is a **Filipina Landscape Architect**. She completed her bachelor's degree in Landscape Architecture with honors from the University of the Philippines where she was also an active student volunteer for social and environmental organizations. Her **five years of work experience** in both private and public-institutional sectors have allowed her to hone her competencies in project management, urban design, and green infrastructure. Witnessing first-hand the lack of priority given to *sustainable and climate-positive methods* in planning and design in the Philippines throughout her education and professional work has inspired her to broaden her horizons and gain specialization in this field.



Her research interests are in utilizing Nature-based Solutions and green infrastructure to mitigate the impacts of the changing climate, and how these can be integrated into cities in an equitable approach. Through the interdisciplinary nature of MURCS, her goal is to explore the complexities of urban climate and to utilize her background in Landscape Architecture to influence urban planning in developing nations.

Maria Soledad Fontana is an **architect and urban planner** who graduated with honours from National University of Rosario (**Argentina**). She also holds a Master 's degree in Urban Studies at National University of General Sarmiento in Buenos Aires. Sole holds 8 years of experience in the field of urban planning. Since 2016 she has worked in public policies as an advisor in the Planning Commission at the City Council of Rosario. She has been involved in several social projects for vulnerable groups which combined with the work performed in the legislative field have transformed her into a specialist in public policies that seek to



reverse urban inequality, guarantee access to housing and the right to the city. Finally, her main areas of interest are urban integration, gender perspective in urban planning and sustainability. Given her training and familiarity with the former areas of interest, she decided to join the MURCS program to expand her understanding on the latter, namely the sustainable urban climate.

Seda Gazioglu is an environmental engineer with a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in environmental biotechnology from Istanbul Technical University. She also studied Sustainability and Economics at the University of Trento, Italy. During her master's studies, she worked as a Researcher for the Scientific Council of Turkey for three years.

After graduating, she began working as a **Sustainability and LCA Expert** and completed over fifty LCA studies. She prepared the Regulation of Eco-labelling as an EU Consultant for the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change. She had spent the previous four years working in both commercial and state banks. Prior to MURCS, she had been working as an



Environmental, Social and Sustainability Specialist in the Development and Investment Bank of Turkey. She was involved in the development and execution of the Bank's Environmental and Social (E&S) Risk Assessment Policy. She is well experienced on E&S risk assessments and monitoring reports according to World Bank, IFC, KfW, AIIB, etc. standards, particularly for renewable energy projects.

She gave E&S trainings to other financial institutions and prepared E&S Management Frameworks for various World Bank projects, as well as preparing a Sustainable Finance Framework in accordance with the ICMA GBP/SBP and LMA GLP/SLP principles. One of her notable projects include lead the Bank's first ESG Risk Rating Project, which received the 4th best ESG rating in Europe among the other Banks (2022).

She has completed trainings and took certifications from Young SDG Innovator and Climate Ambition Accelerator from UN Global Compact, Impact Investment from UNIDO and SDG Investment from UNDP.

She has seven years of work experience and is a dual Romanian (EU) and Turkish citizen.

Maram Mishael an Architectural engineer, from Amman, Jordan. She completed Bachelor's degree in Architecture in 2016 at Applied Science Private University, Amman. After graduation, she started her career as an architectural designer in a well-known company where she was involved in designing and preparation of detailed architectural drawings for residential and commercial projects. After that, she expanded her knowledge and expertise in the field of architecture as she has gained practical knowledge. Under the supervision of a senior architect, she led and participated in 2 sales projects per month with a budget of up to \$10 million. Besides working closely with other professionals and participating in designing & finding creative solutions she was responsible for meeting clients & identifying their requirements and translate them into concrete projects. Furthermore, she possess a good set of digital skills such as AutoCAD 2D & 3D, Revit, Photoshop, Lumion, SketchUp, and 3D Max in addition to her unique language skills in German, Spanish, and English.



Through the MURCS programme she believes that she will be able to achieve part of her future goals, which include her fervent desire to establish new knowledge and skills, and to specialize in urban sustainability in an intercultural context as the MURCS joint master's program aims to produce the next generation of thought leaders that are able to manage urban climate change in a sustainable manner.

Ashan is an **Architect** and has been practicing in the industry since completing his bachelor's degree in architecture from the University of Moratuwa, **Sri Lanka**. Since his undergraduate research project, his interest in carbon management within the urban built environment and materiality has always been a pursued goal throughout his career, and further spurred his desire to explore theoretical and practical considerations for urban sustainability. Though the execution of sustainable strategies in local context is challenging, he has strived to implement them to a considerable level during his **four-year work experience**, even in his private practice. He believes it is worth trying, regardless of the challenges, to offer valuable and effective services to the world as a consultant to enhance sustainable practices.



His passion to contribute to mitigate climate change in research and practice has shaped his ambition to continue with higher education on urban climate and sustainability through MURCS. Combining engineering and management skills with his architectural background is also an advantage to be gained through the programme, to have a multidisciplinary approach in future pursuits.

Swan is a **participatory landscape and urban designer** with a background in landscape architecture, public space design, and community-based urban development projects. After graduating **summa cum laude from Berkeley City College**, Swan completed her **B.A. in Landscape Architecture at the University of California, Berkeley** before returning to Yangon, Myanmar to contribute to its urban development. Swan also holds a Postgraduate Diploma in Sustainable Urban Development specializing in Urban Environment, Sustainability, and Climate Change from IHS, Erasmus University Rotterdam as an **Orange-Knowledge Program (OKP) scholar** awarded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



With over four years of professional experience, she is passionate about working with communities and nature-based solutions, particularly in the context of developing nations with proven experience in design and management in her roles as a lead designer and junior project manager in local and international projects. Prior to MURCS, Swan was responsible for the local implementation of a two-year, community-based, neighbourhood level water resilience project funded by the Dutch government. Her projects have been **featured on the UN Habitat Urban Best Practices and World Water Week 2021** for their social inclusiveness in urban design. She also has experience in implementing youth educational programs, gamification of urban design such as with Minecraft in partnership with UN Block by Block, delivering

Training of Trainers (ToT) programs, managing grants and community networks, human centered design (HCD), and design thinking.

In the face of climate change, Swan hopes to incorporate natural systems and ecology with the city through her designs for a more liveable and sustainable urban landscape, which has brought her today to continue her postgraduate studies with MURCS.

Isurika is from Kandy, **Sri Lanka**, with an academic background in **geography** for both her bachelors and masters from the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka. During her three-year tenure as a temporary lecturer attached to the Department of Geography and Faculty of Arts, she developed her teaching and research interests towards the dynamic interdisciplinary perspectives of Urban Geography and Studies, with specialties in Green Urbanism, Green Infrastructure Planning, and Climate Resilient Inclusive-Cities to realize the goal of Sustainable



Development acknowledging the spatiotemporal dynamics all over the world. She is keen on expanding her learning horizons in small-scale nature-based solutions for climate mitigation/ adaptation for cities in the global south. Therefore, taking part in webinars, MOOCs, listening to podcasts and reading articles to stay up to date on the field impels her during her leisure time. She strives to emerge as an academic in the professional sphere with a teaching/research career trajectory focused on urban sustainability, hence equipping herself with essential technical and analytical competencies is crucial. The ultimate motivation behind applying to the MURCS program was to get acquainted with international postgraduate education while challenging herself with cross-cultural immersion and reaping the benefits from peer learning while being a part of a multidisciplinary cohort of students with similar academic and professional interests. She appreciates the opportunities offered by the program to witness different sustainability approaches implemented by European cities and hopes the MURCS will make her an aspirational professional who can contribute to sustainable negotiations in academia.

Shaghayegh is an **urban planner and designer** based in **Iran** who **has been in the field for six years**. During her time in the profession, she has had the opportunity to collaborate with various stakeholders, including academia, the commercial sector, and non-governmental organizations, both at the municipal and national levels. Sherry has a good understanding of leading interdisciplinary teams and coordinating urban and rural development projects in Iran's varied climate. She has also been involved in participatory



planning processes in rural development projects. She has held many roles of coordination and management, including serving as the manager of the "Development Facilitation Office" in a challenging neighbourhood in Mashhad City. Sherry's passion for urban design is reflected in her four years of experience as a lecturer, where she taught courses such as "Urban Design Studio", "Urban Design Methods and Techniques", and "Analysing Urban Open Spaces". She has a keen interest in research, teaching, strategic planning, and design-level initiatives. She has applied for the MURCS program to gain additional

knowledge and expand her understanding of sustainability in the context of climate change. She is eager to collaborate with professionals from around the world and broaden her expertise at the international level to develop her skills and knowledge in the field.

Zinat is having seven years of experience in disaster management and climate change-related research in Bangladesh. She worked as a documentation specialist with international NGOs and research organizations for preparing project proposals and action plans for climate-vulnerable communities. She is also skilled to deal with climatic actors like donors, practitioners, and policymakers. One of Zinta's research publications related to women's mental health, who are living in climate-vulnerable areas, was a pioneer research in Bangladesh. She has also worked with climate refugees who are living in urban slums. Zinat completed her undergraduate programme in Environmental Science and Management, and her master's in Climate Change and Development. She wants to advance her research in analysing urban environmental issues and play a significant role to bring out sustainable solutions.



Giovanna Tristán is originally from **Mexico City**, where she acquired her degree in **architecture** at the University of Monterrey Institute of Technology and Higher Education. During her undergraduate studies, she sought to expand her knowledge by obtaining a certification in architecture in urban context at LdM University in Florence, Italy. After finishing her degree, Giovanna ventured into the construction industry, working as a supervisor of several front construction sites in Mexico City and Puebla for more than two years. She was inspired by the impact that architecture and urban planning have on the environment, especially after seeing the effects of climate change firsthand. This led her to further her studies with a master's degree specializing in Climate Change: Adaptation and Mitigation Solutions at Politecnico di Torino. With this added knowledge, she worked as an intern and employee in both the public and private sectors, working on sustainable urban developments. She also dedicated her time to volunteering in the city of Turin, actively engaging with organizations aimed to the development of the cities, revitalization of urban spaces, and organization of events such as the 2021 "Utopian Hours." Giovanna is deeply committed to the fight against climate change, and joining MURCS represents an incredible opportunity for her to work in an international and multidisciplinary environment and address the complex challenges of this pressing issue.



Paola has an academic background in **Urban Planning and Management** from Polis University in Tirana, **Albania**. She has been actively involved in EU-funded projects, initially working part-time during her studies as an intern at the National Planning Agency in Albania and thereafter at Co-PLAN, Institute for Habitat Development.

By combining her hands-on personality with her interest in environmental topics, she joined Co-PLAN as full-time employee, working as an environmental expert with the “Green Lungs for Our Cities” project. At Co-PLAN she further developed her skills in technical urban and environmental planning, by assisting several municipalities in Albania to monitor air and noise quality as well as assessing and mapping throughout GIS ecosystem services provided by urban greenery. Further on, she held the position as the regional coordinator of the Green-AL “Empower Grassroot CSOs for Improved Innovative Environmental Protection in Albania” project. Additionally, Paola has been part of the working groups in various EIAs reports serving as an environmental and GIS expert, in line with Albanian legal requirements.

Her passion for urban resilience and climate change have been pursued in different capacities throughout her studies and career. Through MURCS, she aims to compare and challenge existing concepts on urban climate change and its applications to more complex real-life situations as well as understand possible synergies and knowledge transfer between developing and developed countries on the topic.



Samin is an **engineer** from the foothills of the Himalayas in **Nepal**. His early years of living in the small village of Sindhuli was his first interaction with nature and sustainable community living. The love for nature was always strong in him which was heightened by the readings of Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, and Jack London. When he was growing up, his hometown of Kathmandu was urbanizing rapidly clearing forests and fields to make way for the ever-growing infrastructure needs.

After the completion of his bachelor’s degree in engineering from India he worked as a rural infrastructure engineer in a USAID-funded project in remote districts of Nepal for 2 years. With a strong desire to preserve and promote natural

environment in urban areas he joined the Planning Division of the Department of Urban Development and Building Construction (DUDBC). At the same time, he did his masters in Geographic Information Science and Systems – MSc (UNIGIS). The academic and professional experience in urban planning and spatial analysis made him realize that the complexity of cities cannot be solely examined by orthodox planning methodology, but it requires an integrated multi-disciplinary approach—which he found in MURCS. His goal is to establish a career as an expert in urban environment who will assist in planning cities in harmony with nature.



Luina Alves is an **architect and urbanist** from Campina Grande, **Brazil** and got her bachelor's degree in 2010, starting her career in 2011 as Director of Urban Control in Campina Grande's City Hall, giving urban guidelines according to local legislation, dealing with spatial organization and its problems. Later, she took a job in the State University of Paraíba (UEPB), making different types of architectural projects - laboratories, libraries, classrooms, university restaurant- until 2020, when she took the position as the university's vice pro dean of infrastructure, being responsible to lead a department with more than a hundred people who worked in many different fields - including building maintenance, building projects, security, gardening - and started to get involved in implementing an environmental agenda for the public administration. She was also in the commission for the creation of UEPB's Botanical Garden. In 2021 she finished her specialization in Building Information Modelling Management and now is looking to improve her knowledge in sustainability with new challenges and experiences.



Lili Grigorian is an **Armenian** student from **Russia** with **Georgian** origin. Lili was born in Tbilisi city, Georgia, but grew up and lived in Russia since early childhood. In 2020 she got a bachelor's degree in Urban Planning from Lipetsk State Technical University. Since the diploma year of the university (July 2019) Lili started her first job experience in the ministry of Architecture and Structure of Lipetsk Region working with the governmental structures of the region and sometimes even federal levels, writing diploma thesis at the same time. After graduation, Lili got a promotion and in July 2021 started working in the new developed Ministry of Urban Planning of Lipetsk Region, till the beginning of the programme.



As a consultant in urban planning for government, Lili wants to create a better connection between private sectors, society and government for creating more rational and effective cities development strategies. Lili applied to MURCS because wanted to learn about most effective ways of cities development, especially for industrial cities, to learn more about urban climate and sustainability.

Learning about different cultures, travelling to new cities, trying different cuisines are her biggest passions. For Lili, the MURCS programme is a great opportunity not only to develop the necessary technical skills but also to learn about different cultures by travelling around different parts of the world. In Lili's opinion, expanding horizons, curiosity and the desire to study is a very important part of self-development of any professional.

Jarin Tasneem Oyshi is an **Environmental Engineer** graduated from **Bangladesh** University of Engineering & Technology (BUET), which is recognized as one of the top-ranking academic institutions in the country. After graduation she joined as a researcher at the Centre for Climate Change and Environmental Research (C3ER), BRAC University, Bangladesh. She was also working as a part-time faculty in the Department of Mathematics and Natural Sciences (MNS) in BRAC University, Bangladesh. Her research mainly focuses on sustainable environmental management, climate change adaptation and climate change policy analysis. She has supported several governmental and non-governmental organizations regarding climate change-related research, policy development, and capacity building for accessing climate finance. In addition, she has demonstrated exemplary leadership qualities at my workplace and successfully managed projects and capacity-building initiatives on climate change.



Jarin has been supporting the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) of Bangladesh in developing national policy documents and enhancing capacities on the climate change negotiation process under the supervision of Dr Ainun Nishat. In addition, she has been involved in developing the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) and Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) of her country. Also, she has supported the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR), Planning Commission under the Ministry of Planning, and Economic Relations Division (ERD) under the Ministry of Finance regarding capacity development activities on climate change and climate finance. Moreover, she has taken the lead in writing proposals in the domain of climate change finance for the Green Climate Fund (GCF) as well as the Adaptation Fund (AF). She has carried out many field-level evaluations, data collection programs, and community perception studies on climate change and disaster management. She has published one book chapter, four journal articles and presented papers in six national and international conferences. Presently, she is volunteering as the Vice President of the non-profit organization named Bangladesh Youth Parliament on Water (BYPW), one of the chapters of the World Youth Parliament for Water (WYPW).

Luiza is a young urban professional from **Brazil** graduated in **civil engineering and public administration**, with a specialization in **cities management and planning**. She loves to travel and get to know new cultures, new books, new perspectives of life. She has been working for **five years** as a civil servant in the State of Minas Gerais as a specialist in public policy and government management. Luiza works for the Secretariat of Environment and Sustainable Development with urban drainage and solid waste policies for its 853 municipalities. The public sector has allowed her to coordinate projects to repair environmental disasters, to follow up on international agreements of nature-based solutions with ICLEI. As well to develop projects that encourage public-private partnerships to eradicate waste dumps and to promote selective collection.



Outside the professional field, Luiza dedicates herself to volunteer work as coordinator of an NGO that aims to use the food banks donated by supermarkets to organize meals for people in vulnerable situation.

Luiza believes that planning and sustainable urban management are intrinsically connected to climate responsibility. Being part of MURCS is a privilege and Luiza wants to absorb as much as possible of the knowledge provided by her professors and colleagues and return to society, mainly for developing countries. Luiza believes that her public sector background can add to the private sector. Her main areas of interest are circular economy, sustainable consultancy, urban and solid waste management.