

MAYA AJMERA

Global Fund for Children

Chair Emeritus, Echoing Green Board of Directors

1993 Global Fellow



BIG BOLD IDEA

Advance the dignity of children and youth around the world by making small grants to innovative community-based organizations working with some of the world's most vulnerable children and youth, complemented by a dynamic media program that highlights the issues affecting children and celebrates the global society in which we all live.

PERSONAL BIO

A globally recognized social entrepreneur, Maya Ajmera is the President and CEO of Society for Science and Publisher of its award-winning magazine, Science News. Founded in 1921 by E.W. Scripps and W.E. Ritter, the Society works to promote the understanding and appreciation of science and the vital role it plays in human advancement. The Society is best known for the Science News Media Group; its world-class science competitions, including the Regeneron Science Talent Search, Regeneron International Science and Engineering Fair, and Broadcom MASTERS; and a suite of outreach and equity STEM programs.

As an alumna of the Westinghouse Science Talent Search, now sponsored by Regeneron, Maya has helped to transform the 100-year-old Society into a dynamic, entrepreneurial organization. She spearheaded a \$100 million, 10-year sponsorship agreement for the Science Talent Search with Regeneron. In addition, she brought Science News Media Group from a decade-long deficit into a growing enterprise by developing a new education pillar and diversifying the group's income stream. She founded a new series of outreach and equity programs, supported by an \$11 million investment, to reach more underserved STEM students in the United States.

Maya served as the inaugural Social Entrepreneur in Residence at Duke University and as Visiting Professor for the Practice of Public Policy at the Sanford School of Public Policy at Duke. She was a Visiting Scholar and Professorial Lecturer at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) at Johns Hopkins University, where she developed and cowrote Invisible Children: Reimagining International Development at the Grassroots (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016). Today, she continues to serve as an adjunct faculty member at SAIS and teaches the course Social Innovations in International Development for Children and Youth.

In 1993, Maya founded Global Fund for Children (GFC), a nonprofit organization that invests in innovative, community-based organizations working with some of the world's most vulnerable children and youth. Under Maya's 18 years of leadership, GFC grew from a vision into one of the largest networks of grassroots organizations working on behalf of vulnerable children. Since inception, GFC has awarded over \$51 million to more than 900 innovative grassroots organizations, touching the lives of over 11 million children worldwide.

Maya is also an award-winning children's book author of more than 20 titles, including Back to School, Every Breath We Take, Children from Australia to Zimbabwe and To Be a Kid, with millions of readers worldwide.

Maya is a recipient of the 2020 National Science Board Public Service Award for her tremendous contribution to increasing the public's understanding of science and engineering. She is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. She is also a recipient of the Henry Crown Fellowship at the Aspen Institute, the Echoing Green Fellowship, the William C. Friday Fellowship for Human Relations and the Rotary International Graduate Fellowship.

She is sought out nationally and internationally to address audiences on STEM education, local and global philanthropy, global children's rights, international development and social entrepreneurship. Her work and life story have been profiled by such media outlets as CNN, The Oprah Winfrey Show, Financial Times, NPR and many others.

Maya is a board member for Echoing Green, Kids in Need of Defense, Sibley Memorial Hospital/Johns Hopkins Medicine and the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics Foundation. She served as a member of the Innovation and Civil Society subgroup of the Obama presidential transition's Technology, Innovation and Government Reform Policy Working Group.

Maya holds an A.B. from Bryn Mawr College and a M.P.P. from the Sanford School of Public Policy at Duke University. She lives in Washington, D.C., with her husband and daughter.

Organization/Fellow Location

Washington, United States

Organization Structure

Nonprofit

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