

WHAT'S INSIDE

Dear Friends,

A very Happy 2015 to you all!

Looking back at Aidha in 2014, two words keep springing to mind: '**change**' and '**growth**'. From the two major changes in our campus and office location; to the restructuring of our staff team; the significant increase in the number of new students enrolled; in the increased activities conducted for students, alumni and volunteers; and the new corporate partners who came on board this year, **2014 was a remarkable year for Aidha.**



We celebrated Aidha's eighth birthday in July, a big milestone for Aidha. November marked the graduation of **110 graduates** – a record number for Aidha. It was a beautiful ceremony, with many mentors and employers looking like proud parents and children rushing up on stage with big bouquets in hand for the women who have become part of their families.

With more students and more classes, the need for more mentors became pressing but we remained fortunate (and thankful) in having dedicated and big-hearted people who contribute their time and talents in so many different ways.

Once again, Aidha's loyal supporters - Alexander Mann Solutions, AustCham, Barclays, Deutsche Bank, Goldman Sachs, Kadence and MasterCard continued to provide

donations grants and *pro bono* expertise. Without their commitment and generosity, our number of students and graduates would not be growing this rapidly. We also welcomed several new friends this year including Coutts Bank, Google, Mazars, PayPal, Thomson Reuters, UPenn Wharton Alumni and White and Case. Our collaboration with the Ministry of Manpower strengthened this year as they continued their support of our programmes and activities.

**2015** continues in similar dynamic vein and we deliberately held back this issue to bring you news of our exciting new programme which will be launched on 25 January 2015. **The Alumni Development Programme** will comprise Business Plan Clinics, workshops on practical business-related topics, a Leadership Programme and excitingly, a chance for Alumni to pitch their business plans to a potential donor and secure funding and/or mentoring for a year. When we announced this at the Graduation Ceremony last November, the response both from Alumni and their employers was very enthusiastic.

We are also working on a new newsletter format. Monthly digests will now bring you news of Aidha's students, and events much sooner and in a more mobile-phone friendly format so you can read the news on the go.

We had so much to celebrate in 2014 only because so many passionately of you believe in our cause and share so generously your help, time and talents. With your continued support, we look ahead with optimism and zeal to an even **energetic and purposeful 2015!**

**Karen Fernandez**

Chief Executive Officer

## In the Spotlight

# Aidha Graduation 2014

Largest batch of graduates receive Certificate of Graduation

By Ting Claravall



Aidha graduates posing with CEO Karen Fernandez, mentors and volunteers

110 graduates filled up the auditorium at UWCSEA-Tampines campus last 30 November 2014 for the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Aidha Graduation Ceremony—a record number for Aidha.

Together with them were their mentors, employers, friends, Aidha staff and former students, who in one way or another, supported their journeys through Aidha's holistic entrepreneurship programme.

This year's ceremony opened with a grand procession of the graduates into the auditorium – a new addition that swelled the hearts of

everyone present. CEO Karen Fernandez welcomed everyone with a speech that paid tribute to the determination and hard work of the graduates as well as to the committed mentors and volunteers who had helped them so generously on Sundays. Karen also announced the launch of the new Aidha Alumni Club – a development programme for Alumni that will include Business Plan Clinics, workshops on practical, business-related topics, a leadership programme, and the opportunity to pitch their business plans to potential investors for funding and mentoring.

Consul General Victorio Mario Dimagiba from the Embassy of the Republic of the Philippines graced the occasion again as this year's Guest of Honour and delivered an inspiring speech to the graduates, praising them for their courage in stepping outside their comfort zones.

Another welcome tweak to this year's festivities was the musical performance. Traditionally performed by the graduates, the entertainment number this year



# In the Spotlight

## Aidha Graduation 2014 - cont'd

was provided instead by a trio of musicians led by the Keynote Speaker herself, Eileen Chai. Ms Chai, a former national athlete for Singapore in gymnastics, athletics and springboard diving, played the violin to an enthralled house. In her speech afterwards, she shared about her journey from sports to music, and the challenges she faced. Her theme of focus, persistence and determination in fulfilling one's dreams resonated deeply with the graduates, many of whom face their own hardships and sacrifice to fulfill their dreams of owning businesses and securing a better future for their families.

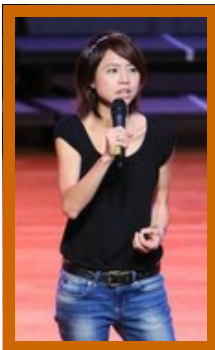
The Best Business Plan Awards followed the Keynote Speech. Always the most exciting highlight of every year's graduation, this year's Business Plan portion opened

with a video created by volunteer Ruben Ramos. It outlined the story of the nine top contenders for the Business Plan Awards and comments from the panel of judges. Afterwards, the top three Business Plan Finalists – Emi Lestari, Merry Ermalyn Singhay and Kristine Navarro – shared stories of courage, hope and inspiration and their future business plans. Kristine's 'Tatay Honesto Homes' – a hostel named in honour of her departed father – for students stranded by floods in typhoon-stricken Philippines won the top honours. AustCham Executive Director, Annette Tillbrook, awarded the three finalists with trophies and cash prizes.

After the Presentation of Graduation Certificates, the graduates were assembled on stage

for a final celebratory group photo with the VIPs. A scrumptious tea reception provided by Sodexo followed in the foyer, where a Photo Booth was also set up. Long queues formed as graduates waited to take photos wearing a graduation gown. It certainly added an extra element of fun to the day's celebrations.

All in all it was a wonderful celebration for the entire Aidha community, especially our graduates. We thank all the sponsors who made the event a resounding success: MasterCard, AustCham, Sodexo and United World College South East Asia; as well as our hardworking Graduation 2014 Volunteer Team led by Ms Lidia Riveros.



Clockwise from top: A packed auditorium during graduation; Music number with Eileen Chai, Keynote Speaker; Aidha CEO Karen Fernandez and Consul General Victorio Dimagiba handing out certificates; Emcee Ting Claravall; CEO Karen Fernandez making the welcome speech; Consul General Dimagiba addressing the audience; Keynote speaker Eileen Chai giving her message

# In the Spotlight

## Behind the Scenes: Aidha Students and Business Leaders Meet and Inspire

By Laura Dobberstein

Nine Aidha students showcased their business plans in a competition judged by representatives from Barclays Bank, Deutsche Bank, AustCham, Google, MasterCard, and Aidha Module 2 Mentors on Sunday November 9th.

The finalists represented the top nine out of 110 graduates in the current graduating class.

All Module 2 students are required to write a business plan as part of the graduating requirements.

With their long working hours, students often spend their little spare time in evenings and Sundays working hard to complete their business plans, which have to include cost calculations, marketing and funding strategies.

Presenting their plans to the judging panel was definitely nerve-racking for the finalists but they put their public speaking skills honed in the Module 1 Leadership Club and Module 2 Advanced Leadership Club to good use and presented their case well to the industry leaders on the judging panel.

Aidha's CEO Karen Fernandez

presented the winners of the event with certificates. Third place winner was forward-thinking tailor and dressmaker Emi Lestari who wore a dress she made herself to the competition. Emi Lestari plans to

and school during the typhoon and rainy season. Kristine hopes to give back to her community by providing the students with a "home away from home".

With some capital already accumulated, the finalists continue to save towards their business goals in order to build a more sustainable life for their families and communities. This Business Plan Award competition is an important step towards reaching these goals as it allows the students to exercise business

acumen in a supportive environment and celebrate the final product they created in the Aidha programme. Participants reported a boost in confidence and morale from the encouragement they received at the event.

"It was hard to choose the top three, all of [the participants] deserve praise for their effort" said competition judge Angelo Roxas from Barclays. "I found [the students] to be inspirational and I would like to thank them for giving me the opportunity to hear about their plans for a brighter future."



Nine business plan finalists posing with the Business Plan

use the profits from her current business—rearing cows - to fund a boutique and bespoke dress shop in Indonesia.

Second place went to fashionista Merry Engana who plans to bring an innovative nail art salon to her hometown of Jaso-An in the Philippines. During her presentation, Merry Engana demonstrated the application of her artful design.

Socially-minded Kristine Navarro took first place with her plans to open a hostel for students in the Philippines who struggle with commutes between their homes

# In the Spotlight

## Behind the Scenes: Business Plan Winners' Journey To A Brighter Future

By Jackie Winstanley

This year's Business Plan winners share their incredible stories.

First place winner Kristine Navarro was motivated to join Aidha because she realized her Sundays were spent idly and she wanted to make her day off more productive. She found Aidha online and with her employer's support, joined Module 1 to learn more about saving money and how to increase her's and her family's standard of living. Her business idea of a student hostel came about because 25% of students who attend the secondary school in her province live far away, and she wanted to provide a safe and clean living space for these youths.



1st place, Kristine Navarro, presenting her business plan

The process of writing the business plan was difficult for Kristine but she was motivated by her desire to honour her late father and keep his memory alive. Her hostel will be named after him, Tatay Honesto Home, and she hopes to pay tribute to the love, sacrifice and care he gave to his entire family.



Kristine Navarro's hostel business

She is grateful for the support she received throughout the process and says that the most challenging part for her was generating the financial portion of the plan, including recognizing the target market, identifying risks, understanding taxes and complying with legal requirements. She had to work hard to manage her time. Even when she was busy, tired or just feeling lazy, Kristine would tell



2nd place., Merry Engana's nail art business

herself to work on her plan for 20-30 minutes whenever possible.

In five years' time, Kristine hopes to no longer be working as a FDW and instead be running her own business in her province. Not only does she want to be a business woman, she also wants to serve society by volunteering. She encourages Aidha donors and mentors to never tire of helping the organisation which provides a chance for FDWs to think about and plan for their futures. When asked what she would say to current or prospective students, Kristine states, 'please don't lose hope.' Even if they are feeling tired, she encourages others to focus on why they are studying and to gain



Merry Engana with her business plan

inspiration from loved ones. She finds strength and comfort in her faith.



# In the Spotlight

## Behind the Scenes: Business Plan Winners' Journey - cont'd

By Jackie Winstanley



3rd place, Emi Lestari, with her business plan

Merry is 'crazy' about doing nails and decided on a Nail Art salon in order to use her passion to create a business. Merry says that there were many challenges to writing her business plan but with the overwhelming financial and personal support from her employer, she was able to overcome these trials.

Merry found the financial aspect of the business plan the hardest. Initially unsure if she would have the number of customers needed to create a successful business, after travelling home and conducting research, she gained more confidence. The next challenge is to make it a reality. She plans to work in Singapore for a few more years to increase her savings before moving home. Her employer has a friend who owns 10 nail salons in the Philippines and Merry hopes to

work at one of them to gain knowledge of the business before opening her own.

Merry pays tribute to her amazing mentors who helped open her eyes about the possibilities available to her with the right support and education. She wants other FDWs to keep dreaming, and remember that if they work hard and remain focused, it will happen. 'Believe in yourself.'

***"Believe in yourself"***  
***- Merry Engana***

Emi Lestari, 3rd of our top three winners, heard about Aidha from a speech that an Aidha student made at the Foreign Domestic Workers Day conference. The idea of learning about saving money was particularly interesting to her since she had been in Singapore for 10 years but not managed to save any money, instead sending it all home whenever her family asked. Her business plan idea arose from her hobby of designing



Emi Lestari in her own dress design

dressses. She has a 3-in-1 business plan of a dress-making boutique, dress making courses and eventually, wedding dresses.

Although challenging, the experience



Emi Lestari's cow business

of developing her business plan was rewarding. Emi wanted to prove to herself and everyone else that she could successfully complete her plan; and her newfound confidence from helped her to achieve this goal. Like the others, the most difficult aspect for her was also financial and working out how much capital she would need. She recognizes that if she cannot raise all the capital required, she will start small and grow her business slowly. Emi plans on leaving Singapore in 2-3 years' time so she can save more money for her business.

Once her business is established, Emi she hopes to volunteer her time to teach a dress-making course. To current and prospective students, she says that nobody else can create their success and if they really, really want it, they can do it!

# Our Mentor Star

## Lisa Edmondson: Aidha's Star Volunteer

by Jackie Winstanley

Lisa Edmondson is this quarter's Aidha Star Volunteer, and it's easy to understand why. Lisa, originally from Australia, has also lived in Europe and spent most of her adult life in the United States. She is a true global citizen whose travels and experiences have helped ignite her passion for children, women and the generally under-represented people in whichever country she resides.



Lisa Edmondson and Animesh Agarwal posing together with Aidha Business Plan finalist

Lisa has worked as a Human Resources Director throughout her career; and whether working full-time, part-time or consulting, she believes that employees who volunteer outside of work tend to be happier, more productive and well-balanced.

Her passion and devotion to Aidha is contagious and we had a chance to sit and ask Lisa a few questions about what inspires her and how we can further spread the word.

Lisa first heard about Aidha when a colleague from work introduced her to his good friend Sarah Druce, who leads training for Aidha. Knowing Lisa's passion for charity work and Aidha's need for a Human Resources advisor, her colleague considered Aidha a perfect match. Lisa was originally brought in to

assist the Board in finding a new CEO for Aidha, to replace outgoing Executive Director, Veronica Gamez.

But she quickly increased her involvement by becoming a mentor for the Advanced Leadership Club and a substitute for Venture Club. Lisa credits Veronica's passion and drive for her initial excitement about Aidha, but because she also knows first-hand how difficult it can be to be in a new place as an immigrant, her commitment to the cause grew. Lisa is passionate about empowering women to build not only a better future for themselves, but also a sustainable future for their families.

Her enthusiasm about her volunteer work is palpable and it's readily

apparent how much she enjoys working with Aidha. When asked what her most rewarding volunteer experience has been, Lisa says all of it! Each experience is somehow more fulfilling than the last, so her most recent volunteer event tends to be her most satisfying. That is not just Lisa giving an easy answer; she genuinely finds each and every aspect and experience gratifying.

***"The experience of volunteering will always be more powerful and rewarding than you expect."***

***- Lisa Edmondson***

# Our Mentor Star

## Lisa Edmondson: Aidha's Star Volunteer - cont'd

by Jackie Winstanley

However, since we asked for a specific event, Lisa provided the example of the nine Aidha graduate finalists presenting their business plans to the judges. Watching the women develop not only their business acumen, but also their confidence is her most recent fulfilling encounter.

Lisa's message to prospective volunteers and donors is that the experience of volunteering will always be more powerful and rewarding than you expect. She encourages prospective volunteers to put aside any fears of over-commitment or interference in their as an individual can commit one step at a time or to specific projects. Lisa has never felt overwhelmed by Aidha obligations and emphasises that Aidha has a strong system of back-ups should something come up. For Lisa, volunteering has become addictive. The tangible power and excitement felt on campus changed her view from, "This is a good thing to do for someone else" to, "This is good for me." Lisa urges young professionals to get involved in mentoring because there is a lot to learn from



Lisa posing with Niek Van Veen and Riza Lingga

the strong curriculum taught and about the dynamics of human behaviour.

When asked what Aidha would be if it was an object, Lisa laughed, pondered, and then decided on an orange. This is not only because it's Aidha's signature color, but because of its attributes. On the surface, an orange looks

unknowable. Its bumpy skin doesn't hint at whether it will be sweet or sour, but once you peel it open, you realize it is sweet and multi-faceted; much like the amazing group that makes up Aidha and the diversity of Singapore in general. Oranges also have many uses as they can be made into juice, popsicles or put into fruit salads. Lisa adds, "And hey, who doesn't like oranges?"

Lisa's wish for Aidha for 2015 is that every prospective student who has the desire to obtain an education has the opportunity through scholarships, employers' help, or their own savings. If Lisa was CEO of Aidha, she would immediately give herself and her team a big hug and an enthusiastic congratulations for thriving despite what has been a difficult 2014. The team moved campuses, offices and experienced staff turnover, but through all of this has continued to flourish with passion for the present and optimism for the future. Thank you Lisa, for being an inspiring and untiring supporter of Aidha!



## Fund Raising

### Screening of 'Half the Sky' Raises Money and Awareness

by Laura Dobberstein

Ninety guests from various financial institutions and industry organisations gathered on Wednesday, December 3<sup>rd</sup> as part of Goldman Sachs Charity Screening of *Half the Sky*, a documentary that highlights the oppression of women in the developing world and current programme working towards gender equality.

Ms Divyata Ashiya, managing director of investment management at Goldman Sachs-Singapore, believes that investing in women creates a significant multiplier effect. Female education leads to not only increased income and better living conditions, but also to healthier, more educated families

and communicates.

Aidha's CEO, Karen Fernandez,



spoke of how the opportunity for financial education and self-development skills gave FDWs and their families a chance for a brighter future.

*Half the Sky* is based on a book of the same name by husband-wife team Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn and received funding from the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Women Initiative. The movie addresses topics such as sex trafficking, rape and the challenges girls have in receiving education, yet it leaves the viewer with a sense of hope and change.

The screening succeeded in of raising over \$4,795 for Aidha and awareness among many of the attendees. One audience member reported having no idea the struggles some women face with basic everyday tasks. "It's a real eye-opener," he said.

### Mastercard Gift Presentation for Aidha Graduates

by Ratri Maria

On 3<sup>rd</sup> of November 2014, a gift presentation was held at the MasterCard office. Three non-profit organisations based in Singapore, were selected, with Aidha being fortunate to be one of them.

MasterCard had generously donated 800 pre-paid cards with a value of \$20 each and 800 umbrellas to Aidha. The very first recipients of these gifts were the graduates of 2014, who were delighted to receive them.

Karen Fernandez, Aidha's CEO, thanked MasterCard for their continued support and generosity, which enables Aidha to keep helping foreign domestic workers achieve bright futures for themselves and their families.



(From left to right)  
Deborah Heng, Karen Fernandez, and Debbie Goldingham

2014 Aidha graduates happily showing their MasterCard pre-paid cards and umbrella



# Aidha Alumni Development Programme

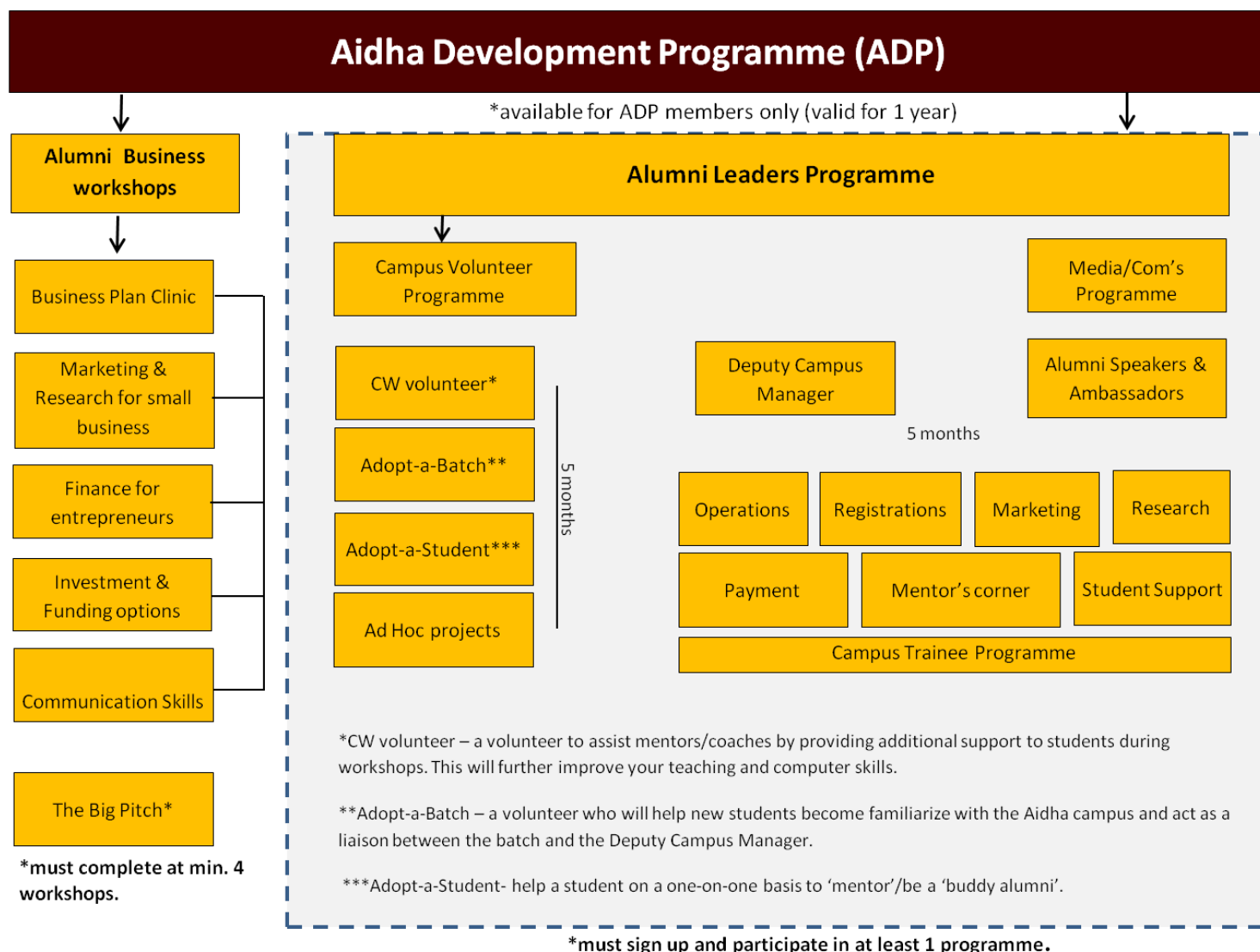
During the annual Graduation Ceremony on 30 November 2014, Aidha announced our first-ever Aidha Alumni Development Programme (ADP). This programme aims to provide continued support to Aidha Graduates. Aidha Alumni Development Programme comprises of three programmes dedicated for all Aidha graduates:

- Practical Workshops on business related topics, where alumni have the opportunity to seek advice and guidance on their business plans
- Leadership Development Programme, where alumni will be able to leverage on their leadership and organisational skills by participating in various Aidha

campus roles or activities

- The Big Pitch Session, where they have the opportunity to 'sell' their business ideas to potential investors and also stand a chance to receive mentoring for up to 12 months

With the first workshop launching on the 25th of January 2015, the ADP will require professionals from various disciplines to help conduct sessions. Stay tuned for more exciting updates about Aidha ADP!



# Inside Aidha

## Meet the Aidha staff



**RACHEL VILLEGIER**  
Campus Manager



### Reading

*Alternating between various books in my Kindle depending on mood, from Proust's "In Search of Lost Time" to short stories*

### Craving

*Cheese, of course!*

### Listening

*Joe Hisaishi*

### Idea of Fun

*Hiking in MacRitchie Reservoir Park*

### How can we find you?

*Running around the campus on Sundays, on Facebook (Rachel Aidha)*

**You can have lunch with three people - who would you choose?**

*Irina Bokova, Sheikha Mozah, Banksy*



**GEETIKA AGARWAL**  
Student Affairs Manager



### Reading

*Jeffry Archer, Devdutt Patnaik, Sudha Murthy*

### Craving

*Sinful things like cakes, chocolates and fried spicy stuff*

### Listening

*Sufi songs and ghazals by Jagjit Singh/Ghulam Ali*

### Idea of Fun

*Movies, swimming, cycling and sleeping*

**How can we find you**  
*geetiika@gmail.com*

**You can have lunch with three people - who would you choose?**  
*Enid Blyton, Dr. Abdul Kalam, Devdutt Patnaik.*



**TIA SUTRESNA**  
Programmes Manager



### Reading

*'Perfect Hostage' by Justin Winstle*

### Craving

*Coffee and chocolates*

### Listening

*So many! Currently most listened to: Imagine Dragons, Sting, The Script, Taylor Swift, Meghan Trainor, U2*

### Idea of Fun

*Traveling, Having fun with my kids: ice skating, movies, going on Luge.*

**How can we find you**  
*Twitter/instagram: TiaShud*

**You Can Have Lunch With Three People - Who Would You Choose?**  
*My Father, Anita Roddick, Mother Teresa*



# Inside Aidha

## Meet the Aidha staff - con'td



**KAREN FERNANDEZ**  
CEO



### Reading

*Mere Anarchy (Woody Allen),  
Half the Sky (Nicholas Kristoff  
and Sheryl WuDunn)*

### Craving

*Never crave food! To be  
travelling instead...*

### Listening

*Hugh Laurie,  
Manhattan Transfer,  
Jools Holland*

### Idea of Fun

*doing nothing at all; spending  
all afternoon in a bookshop*

### How can we find you

*WhatsApp*

**You can have lunch with  
three people - who would  
you choose?**

*Pico Iyer, JB Brown,  
Woody Allen*



**MARINA CHIERICATO**  
Finance and Admin  
Manager



### Reading

*Wu Ming Il romanzo del Ter-  
rore*

### Craving

*Cheese and red wine*

### Listening

*My new Spotify  
compilation*

### Idea of Fun

*Hiking, skiing, swimming,  
whatever you can do open air*

### How can we find you

*Just drop me an email*

**You can have lunch with  
three people - who would  
you choose?**

*Cannot limit to 3!  
All the characters of the books  
I read that where close friends  
for a while*



**SHARDA V**  
HR & Volunteer Manager



### Reading

*Vikran Seth, Roald Dahl*

### Craving

*Red Velvet cupcake*

### Listening

*Frank Sinatra*

### Idea of Fun

*White-water rafting*

### How can we find you

*Twitter @visharda*

**You can have lunch with  
three people - who would  
you choose?**

*Nandita Das, Gregory Peck,  
Marilyn Monroe*



**RATRI MARIA**  
Development & Comms  
Manager



### Reading

*The Redbeast – Jon Nesbo*

### Craving

*Sashimi!*

### Listening

*John Legend, Damien Rice*

### Idea of Fun

*Anything that is impromptu*

### How can we find you

*Instagram : MRatri*

**You can have lunch with  
three people - who would  
you choose?**

*Hannibal Lector, Maya  
Angelou, Andy Warhol*

### Enjoyed this issue? Any feedback for us ?

Please send us any questions, opinions or suggestions to:  
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