

ANUJA GOPALAN

Organisational strategist and grantmaking professional, lights up around people and ideas that push the envelope

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SKILLS

Radical Leadership
Strategic Changemaking
Inclusive Capacity Building
Facilitation
Program Design & Evaluation
DEI Leadership
Negotiation & Conflict Resolution
Somatic & Trauma-Informed Practice

LANGUAGES

English
Hindi
Tamil
Telugu
Marathi

CERTIFICATIONS

Certified Functional
Medicine Coach
Certified Somatic Trauma
Healing Practitioner
Foundation Hairdressing
Course

AFFILIATIONS

Advisory Board Member
Kranti Mumbai —
empowering girls from
red-light areas to become
agents of social change

INTERESTS

Chess
Watercolour
Politics of food
A good whodunit

CURRENTLY

• Hairdresser

Long Story Short · Bangalore · October 2025 – Present

- A deliberate grounding practice during a period of professional transition: returning to client-facing, community-embedded work as a way of staying connected to the texture of everyday life outside institutional philanthropy.
- Deepened skills in deep listening, trust-building with a diverse public, and the quality of presence that relational work requires.

RELEVANT WORK EXPERIENCE

• Program Officer, Security and Innovation

Civil Rights Defenders · Stockholm · April 2022 – February 2025

- Served as strategic advisor across people and operations functions, enhancing team resilience and workplace culture for distributed, high-risk teams in over 20 countries.
- Led crisis response protocols and psychosocial risk audits that informed global policy updates, safeguarding 100+ human rights defenders under extreme pressure.
- Mobilised rapid interventions for human rights defenders in conflict-affected areas, centring safety, agency, and the diverse needs of marginalised activists.
- Designed and operationalised org-wide rituals of psychological safety and peer support, enhancing team cohesion by 40% as measured via staff surveys.
- Facilitated cross-regional learning with stakeholders, infusing mindfulness and cultural nuance into collaboration.
- Elected to the Civil Rights Defenders Union Board to represent employees and advocate for a healthy, equitable workplace.

• Program Officer

Open Society Foundations — Open Society United States (OSUS) and South Asia Program · Bangalore / New York / London · April 2015 – December 2021

- Designed and led the first comprehensive learning and evaluation process for the Open Society US program, grounded in social justice principles.
- Co-created a four-year program strategy with director and board, developing capacity-building workshops and tools to articulate theories of change, assess risk, and measure strategic fit.
- Managed a \$5M regional grantmaking portfolio with a focus on underrepresented voices and grassroots activism across South Asia.
- Co-created a capacity-building initiative for nonprofit leaders, embedding anti-oppressive practices and trauma-informed leadership frameworks.

LEADERSHIP PHILOSOPHY

I believe in leadership that is relational, not transactional. My experiences as a queer and neurodivergent person have shaped my ability to listen deeply, hold complexity, and advocate for systemic change. I lead with transparency, valuing collaboration over hierarchy, and recognise that vulnerability is a strength.

- Navigated funding restrictions in a priority country by pioneering local solutions, demonstrating adaptability, confidentiality, and cultural sensitivity.
- Co-founded the New York Union Organising Committee, building collective agency around mental health, equity, and belonging; later served as Shop Steward at both OSF and CRD.

• Researcher, Centre for Women and the Law

National Law School of India University · Bangalore · September 2013 – March 2015

- Led educational programmes on family law, gender justice, and queer rights for diverse audiences.
- Authored advocacy materials on sex work, patriarchy, and queer rights, translating complex research into actionable policy recommendations.
- Designed and implemented Anti-Sexual Harassment Codes across multiple institutions.

• Research Associate

Centre for the Study of Developing Societies and Jaipur Virasat Foundation · New Delhi / Jaipur · 2011 – 2013

- Conducted socio-political research for Manushi, India's first feminist magazine.
- Served as Communications Officer for the Rajasthan International Folk Festival, leading stakeholder engagement and community partnerships.

• EDUCATION

Bachelor of Laws (LLB) Government Law College, University of Mumbai

Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy University of Mumbai