



2025 Volunteer Salute

HEAL International exists solely because of the efforts of volunteers; we have no paid staff to keep programs and projects operating. Every year at this time, we celebrate a few of those volunteers and it is our pleasure to introduce the 2025 nominees, Mehtab Rai, Aliza Jaffer and Grace Kunnel, who, in their own words, will share the contributions they make to HEAL and the world beyond.

Mehtab Rai



As a dedicated member of HEAL International, I have been involved in advancing health education and access for underserved communities. My work has focused on developing and implementing a culturally sensitive mental health manual for youth in Uganda, created in collaboration with healthcare professionals, teachers, and local community members to ensure it reflects the needs of the population it serves.

Over the years, I've led fundraising initiatives and awareness campaigns, successfully raising over \$10,000 to support educational programs in rural Uganda. These funds have gone directly toward providing essential learning resources and expanding health-focused curriculums in areas where such support is critically needed.

Outside of volunteering, I'm completing a Master of Public Health with a focus on community-based health interventions. I'm also passionate about mentorship, sports, and staying active, which helps me stay balanced and energized in both my academic and volunteer commitments.

My volunteer journey with HEAL International continues to be shaped by a commitment to equity, collaboration, and sustainable impact.

Aliza Jaffer



I have been involved with the University of Calgary (UofC) chapter of Learning Beyond Borders (LBB) since 2019. I joined in my first year as a BHSc student, first as VP of Marketing (2019-20), then as VP of Internal Affairs (2020-21), and later led the club as President (2021-2023). While pursuing my MSc in Medical Sciences, I have continued to support the club as an Advisor (2023-present).

Alongside the LBB team at UofC, I facilitated partnerships and collaborations with several local sponsors across Calgary to organize hockey fundraising tournaments for youth and adults. Donations from these events were directed towards purchasing teaching resources for primary schools in rural Uganda. I also helped organize events on-campus to raise awareness about global inequities in access to education.

I am immensely grateful for the entire UofC LBB team for their ongoing support throughout the years. I extend great appreciation to Kadin Sayani and Adam Gulamhusein for continuing these initiatives at the UofC with strong leadership and dedication.

Inspired by my experiences with LBB, I have gone on to lead educational outreach sessions for elementary school students, deliver guest lectures in neuroscience and health literacy courses, work as a teaching assistant, and support research initiatives for undergraduate and graduate students at UofC. I am also passionate about maternal and child health research, aiming to improve child health outcomes and inform healthcare policy and practices for perinatal care.

I was named one of the Alberta Council for Global Cooperation's 2025 Top 30 Under 30 and look forwards to continuing my involvement as I begin medical school this summer. It is my hope for the future to continue supporting global quality of education and promoting accessible, inclusive, and engaging learning opportunities for students around the world.

Grace Kunnel



Grace has been a member of the Learning Beyond Borders (LBB) club at the University of Alberta since 2022. She started as Vice-President of Fundraising and took on the role of President from 2023-2026.

Grace would like to sincerely thank the UAlberta LBB executive team for their incredible dedication and hard work throughout this year: Shreya Ravi, Tony Tian, Bilal Karim, Ria Robinson, Nathaniel Perumal, Navdeep Singh, Ranine El-Jurdi, and Iltifat Naheyan. The team has organized several fundraising events, pen pal letter sessions, and podcast episodes throughout the year. Their podcast, Global Citizens, explores meaningful conversations surrounding the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the innovative solutions being developed to address them.

“Education is one of the most powerful tools we have, yet many youths around the world face significant barriers to accessing it. This reality drives my commitment to LBB, especially when fundraising for educational resources for students in Uganda. Through our pen pal letter exchanges, we have the opportunity to learn from the lived experiences of the students we support. I’ve come to realize that the most meaningful way to support a cause is by centering and uplifting the voices of those we aim to help. This is what motivates me — knowing that their voices shape every step of my work. Being a good neighbour means recognizing that distance does not limit our responsibility to one another. When we look beyond borders, we become global citizens.”