

**ASSAD  
ZAMIR**

*Afghanistan*



**Company: ABRESHUM VENTURES**

[Facebook Page](#)

**Company Overview:** Abreshum Ventures supports projects and organizations that make a positive social impact, with a particular focus on female-led business initiatives. Abreshum Ventures has supported many entrepreneurs in various sectors such as agriculture, renewable energy and the apparel industry. An example of one of the successful companies supported by Abreshum Ventures is AZ Solar Company, which was established to help provide businesses and communities access to electricity as well as to help combat climate change through renewable energy. So far, AZ Solar has enabled over 200 villages (70,000 families) to have electricity in rural Afghanistan.

### **What was your inspiration for starting your company?**

I have been advising entrepreneurs for many years and observed that one of the most common issues was establishing access to capital. I realized that there was a lack of knowledge among potential investors in Afghanistan around the concept of financing and investing in business ventures, and therefore wanted to create a platform to help entrepreneurs and potential investors better understand the various stages of business development and how to work together collaboratively.

### **Where do you hope to see your company in the next 5 years?**

I'd like my company to be able to help entrepreneurs across Afghanistan and connect them with like-minded businesses and entrepreneurs across the globe — particularly in the Central Asia region. Additionally, I would also like to work with new sectors and create a platform to help the Afghan Diaspora invest in potential projects.

### **How has COVID-19 impacted the entrepreneurship climate in your country?**

The private sector has suffered a great deal from the impacts of COVID-19. Many entrepreneurs had been exporting products or bringing raw materials for processing to Afghanistan, and those processes suffered greatly due to travel and logistical restrictions. Additionally, as 99% of businesses in Afghanistan are typically small to medium size, a fair amount of them have closed down due to their inability to withstand the lasting effects of the pandemic. Currently, the lack of capital to purchase raw material for processing remains a significant issue.



**NINO  
ZAMBAKHIDZE**

*Georgia*



**Organization: Georgian Farmers' Association (GFA)**

[gfa.org.ge/en/](http://gfa.org.ge/en/)

**Organization Overview:** I founded the Georgian Farmers' Association (GFA) in 2012 alongside likeminded individuals. The mission of the GFA is to strengthen the agricultural sector in Georgia as well as the competitiveness of Georgian farmers. Today, the GFA unites 5,000+ farmers and serves as an umbrella organization that facilitates relations between the government and farmers. GFA's core mandate is to advocate for the rights of farmers. Currently, GFA is privileged to be a partner of Copa-Cogeca, which is the united voice of farmers and agri-cooperatives in the European Union (EU). Through this partnership, our organization has gained exposure to the experiences and best practices of the European Agribusiness players. Thus, the GFA is now not only able to transfer this know-how to our members, but it also contributes to Georgia's path towards integration in the EU.

### **Where do you hope to see your organization in the next 5 years?**

I envision GFA to be a robust lobbying organization in Georgia, with a strong foothold in the digital world. Today, we witness digitalization across every sector, and I have the desire to bring innovation to this industry. The GFA has already developed a platform, [www.gfadigital.ge](http://www.gfadigital.ge), which serves as a digital umbrella unifying five digital projects, each dedicated to a specific topic, such as: agriculture (Agronavi.ge, Agromap.ge), education — particularly vocational education and trainings (Agroskills.ge), agro-tourism (Agrogate.world) and employment in the agro-sector (Agrojobs.ge). With the integration of Artificial Intelligence across these platforms, farmers will have the opportunity to plan and manage their agribusinesses in accordance with the current trends and projections. We are also working towards advancements in the agritourism sector. I think in the future, our platform, Agrogate.world, will become a renowned online platform that will be largely utilized to popularize diverse angles of agritourism and the hospitality industry.

### **What is the entrepreneurship climate like in your country?**

The notion of entrepreneurship is quite new in Georgia as we are a country which has been impacted by the Soviet legacy. Consequently, the ecosystem in our country is in the process of formation. From my own observations, it is the youth who are armored with entrepreneurial spirit, which contributes to the emergence and launch of new startups. Moreover, there are various state and donor-funded programs that improve the entrepreneurship climate in Georgia. However, we are still in the initial stages of development, and we have a long way to go ahead of us. I believe that well-established SMEs are at the forefront of developed economies. I have always had an urge to take action to create a precedent and put Georgia on the world map.



**RASMINA  
GURBATOVA**  
*Azerbaijan*



Company: **RESM**

[www.resm.com](http://www.resm.com)

**Company Overview:** Resm Jewelry was founded in 2011 and brought to market in 2012. As owner and designer, I created a unique company rooted in my native Azerbaijan culture and traditions. Every design stems from the history of the East and is unique with a specific name associated with its design pattern. Resm Jewelry offers rings, bracelets, earrings, necklaces, brooches and pendants that represent a modern interpretation of ancient Azerbaijani ornamental patterns and symbols. Each piece comes with a description of its historical context and origins, celebrating the country's heritage and created with integrity using 14 and 18-karat gold bases and precious stones.

### **What was your inspiration for starting your company?**

Like many founders, my entrepreneurial journey began with deep introspection — I had always known that I wanted to start my own business. With a strong sense of style and artistic ability, I carefully developed my creative concept. Fascinated by Azerbaijani cultural heritage — especially national treasures like carpet patterns and other crafts — I saw that there were not any companies currently producing high-quality souvenirs tied to the country's artistic traditions. As I design jewelry, I honor the dreams, hopes and emotions that undoubtedly fueled those ancient creations. All in all, two equally important factors led to the creation of Resm: I wanted to express myself and I wanted a better future for my kids. The latter one turned an art idea into the business.

### **What are some top highlights from your entrepreneurship journey with your company thus far?**

In 2015, I opened a store at the Azerbaijan National Carpet Museum and stalls at the International Airport duty-free shop and the Four Seasons hotel in Baku. In addition, I commissioned my jewelry at a fashion retail store in Washington, D.C.

In 2018, I began focusing my work on the environment and sustainability. Additionally, in 2020 I co-founded Azerbaijan's National Association of Jewelers and hope that this group will continue to foster growth and development of the industry nationwide. This past year I also pioneered many processes in the market, including import and export procedures. Given my expertise in this area, I advocate for legislative changes to promote the growth and development of the industry nationwide.



**AZIZ  
SOLTOBAEV**

*Kyrgyzstan*



SVETOFOR

Company: Svetofor Group

[svetofor.info](http://svetofor.info)

**Company Overview:** Founded in August 2004, Svetofor is the leading ecommerce marketplace in the Kyrgyz Republic which unites several online companies operating in the trading, ecommerce, IT and system integration areas in Central Asia.

### What was your inspiration for starting your company?

In 2004 there seemed to be a clear understanding that the future belonged to those who owned information and created value on the Internet. I suspected that ecommerce would grow based upon the influence of the power of the Internet within the region. I love trade services — I was selling fruits by the age of 6 and distributing newsletters by the age of 10 — and I have always loved technology. Ecommerce fits my passion and expertise.

### Where do you hope to see your company in the next 5 years?

I hope Svetofor will be a vertically integrated ecommerce platform serving millions of people and facilitating cross-border ecommerce sales in the Central Asian region.

### How has COVID-19 impacted the entrepreneurship climate in your country?

COVID-19 has certainly negatively impacted the Kyrgyz economy and many SMEs have experienced shrinkages, particularly in the trade and services sectors where sales dropped up to 50%. A few industries have demonstrated growth or recovered, such as IT outsourcing, agricultural products and gold mining exports. During the spring/summer of 2020 we experienced a fivefold increase in requests for recovery services but could not fulfill the majority due to strict governmental lockdown measures and border closures.



# OZODKHON DAVLATSHOEV

Tajikistan



Company: Tcell

[www.tcell.tj/en/](http://www.tcell.tj/en/)

**Company Overview:** Tcell is the largest leading mobile and data company in Tajikistan. It employs 500+ full-time staff and has created an additional 3,000 jobs from its direct contracts and outsourcing services. It has the country's largest radio, microwave and high-capacity fiber optic transmission infrastructure that not only connects the entire country, but also links Tajikistan to its neighboring countries of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan. Tcell is now being positioned as an innovative, digital company transforming digital platforms, machine learning, big data, artificial intelligence, smart and IoT and fintech-employing efficient broadband services. It has become a Mobile Virtual Network Enabler at the forefront of bringing the latest technologies to Tajikistan. It was the first company to bring GSM, 3G and 4G to Tajikistan and is now positioning Tajikistan to be one of the first countries in Eurasia to receive and deploy 5G technology.

## What was your inspiration for starting your company?

20 years ago my country desperately needed to bring the (then) latest technology of GSM in order to open the country up from its communications silo, as it was well known that investment in telecommunications could fast-track the development of the economy by sixfold or more. During my time as an investment officer, my first investment project was learning from success stories from neighboring countries like Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. The investment pitch for Tcell was approved in 2000. Since then, it has seen tremendous growth, progress and capitalization, and remained the number one company in the market, despite strong competition.

## What is a top highlight from your entrepreneurship journey with your company thus far?

Nothing can replace hard work when it comes to achieving success. Being bold has its own dividends as well. Technology provides amazing opportunities — particularly economic opportunities when it comes to starting new businesses and creating high-skill jobs. It is satisfying to realize 20 years later that you happen to have been in the sector that creates the future, though I did not know that at the outset. Invest in people: own your journey but do not be selfish. Spend one hour to plan your next 23 hours. Pausing/stopping is sometimes a better decision than moving (in the wrong direction fast and firm). Learn to fail and fail fast.

## How has COVID-19 impacted the entrepreneurship climate in your country?

It took a bit of time to adjust to new realities, like a primarily contactless world and logistical issues. In a landlocked country, amidst a challenging geopolitical environment, logistics are a primary challenge, which in turn impacts operations, as well as the choice and availability of goods and services. Given that labor migration is also a significant contributor to the economy, pandemic restrictions had a dramatic impact on the inflow of proceeds from remittances.

A lack of hard currency (from remittances) created a deficit in the trade balance, dramatically depreciated the value of the local currency, and therefore made goods and services more expensive, given that Tajikistan is still largely import dependent. It has, however, created opportunities for rethinking local industries — especially the agriculture sector — with a refocusing on local markets.



**HIKMAT  
ABDURAHMANOV**

*Uzbekistan*



**Organization: TEAM University**

[teamuni.uz/](http://teamuni.uz/)

**Organization Overview:** TEAM University is a privately funded entrepreneurial university founded in 2020 and located in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. It is the first entrepreneurial university in Uzbekistan and partners with London South Bank University, another university with outstanding entrepreneurial programs. TEAM University is recognized for its practice-based research, academic excellence and core values of developing social wellbeing and collaborating with staff and students of diverse backgrounds and cultures.

### **What was your inspiration for starting your organization?**

TEAM University is the most inspiring project with which I have ever been involved. Throughout my life, I have seen how the university experience transforms youth. Personally, I have benefited greatly from studying both locally and abroad. So, when Uzbekistan started to open back up and the government announced that it welcomed the private sector to partner with higher education, without hesitation I started to work on this partnership between education and entrepreneurship alongside seven business partners and leading representatives within the local business community. It took us about two years of meeting dozens of local and foreign institutions — including immense support from our friends in the CAMCA Network across Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Kazakhstan. Thanks to the collaboration within our network, we learned so much. Finally, in April of 2020 we received the government decree on the establishment of TEAM University.

### **Where do you hope to see your organization in the next 5 years?**

Alongside several more specific goals and initiatives, we hope that TEAM University will be a leading private entrepreneurship institution in the country and broader Central Asia.

### **How has COVID-19 impacted the entrepreneurship climate in your country?**

In April of 2020, it was near disaster. As with countries across the globe, no one was expecting such unknown changes brought by the pandemic. Fortunately, with a year dedicated to intense work aimed to reshape and restructure our business model, I personally think that our business team is consequently more agile and strong, as well as leaner and resilient. Some entities had to drop out along the way, but many, like ours, adapted to the new reality.



**ZACK  
BATSAIKHAN**  
*Mongolia*



Companies: Unread Media and WorldPlus Digital

[www.unread.media](http://www.unread.media) / [www.vtv.mn](http://www.vtv.mn)

[www.wplus.world](http://www.wplus.world)

**Company Overview:** Unread Media + VTV is a hybrid media company that empowers the next generation through disruptive storytelling and experiences. Recently merged with nationwide broadcasting television channel, VTV, and new strategic investors including Ard Financial Group, Unread Media is aiming to become the biggest public media group and media-tech solution provider in Mongolia.

WorldPlus Digital is a technology company specializing in digital publishing tools and platforms. WorldPlus — its primary product — offers a fully interactive library of world-renowned magazines. The company's additional services include Whytelabel, a way for publishers and third parties to create standalone platforms based on proprietary technology.

### What are some top highlights from your entrepreneurship journey thus far?

Unread Media has just acquired VTV, a nationwide broadcasting channel. Considering that there are only 15 nationwide channels in Mongolia, that is a massive milestone. WorldPlus Digital was first launched on top of Marina Bay Sands in Singapore, and then Tokyo, Japan. I was also named to *Forbes Mongolia* "30 under 30" in 2015 for my entrepreneurship efforts.

### What was your inspiration for starting your companies?

All of my ventures are dedicated to empowering and inspiring the youth and young professionals in Mongolia through the use of technology, innovation and positive, original and independently produced content.

### How has COVID-19 impacted the entrepreneurship climate in your country?

COVID-19 has been very challenging for startups and SMEs due to long-lasting lockdowns and mismanagement within the government. While jobs have been lost and companies have been liquidated, everyone is doing their best to adjust to the new normal and newly adopted remote work culture. However, I also think that COVID-19 has accelerated some positive trends within e-government, digital banking solutions, ecommerce, cryptocurrency and other technology-based innovations such as saliva-based COVID testing developed by Mongolian scientists.

