

October 2025 Thrivability Matters Webinar Highlights Featuring Saeid Zahedi, Dr. Suzie Husain, and Dr. Saji Varghese

[THRIVE Project](#) is incredibly grateful to Saeid Zahedi, Dr. Suzie Husain, and Dr. Saji Varghese for their inspirational presentations during the October 2025 [Thrivability Matters Webinar](#). This webinar focused on THRIVE Project's October theme - *Innovation: Poverty, Hunger & Livelihoods*. Our presenters captivated us as they shared their extensive knowledge regarding this theme, as they discussed how our cities and communities can become more thrivable as our world becomes increasingly connected, providing people with happy and prosperous lives, now and into the future.

Here are the highlights from our webinar!

About the October 2025 Speakers



Saeid Zahedi is a former diplomat with extensive experience in international relations, sustainable development, and cross-cultural collaboration.

He has worked in senior government advisory roles and in embassies around the

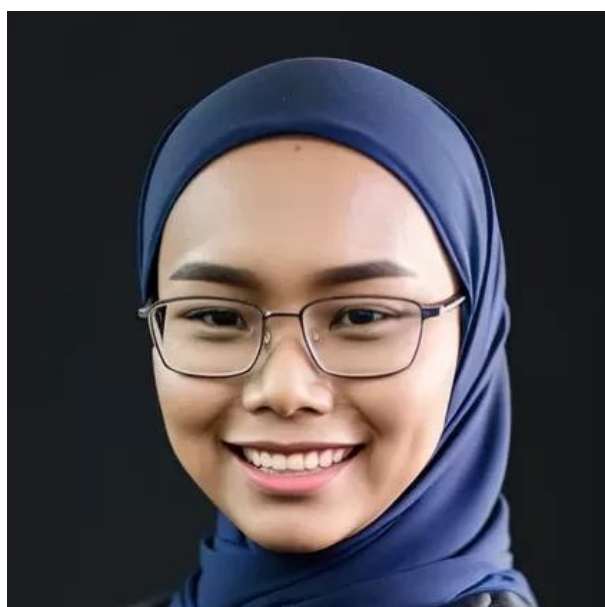
world, contributing to policy development, research, and UN negotiations.

Saeid Zahedi holds a master's degree in international relations. Originally from Iran and now living in Melbourne, he values community, learning, and the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to collective goals.

Dr. Suzie Husain serves as Chair of the Soil Health Expert (SHE™) Council. With over 15 years of professional experience, her work focuses on regenerative agronomy, soil governance, and biological restoration of degraded agricultural lands. She is the principal architect of the SHE™ Framework, a diagnostic and certification model aimed at restoring soil integrity through scientific, ecological, and policy-based interventions.

Dr. Suzie holds advanced qualifications in soil science and leads regional training programs through REGERICA™ Academy, empowering farmers, agropreneurs, and institutions with actionable tools for soil regeneration.

Her advocacy centers on repositioning soil as a sovereign asset critical to climate resilience, food security, and national development. She has consulted for smallholders, plantations, governments, and global agencies, and continues to drive change through education, research, and strategic policy engagement across the Global South.





[Dr. Saji Varghese](#) is an Associate Professor in the Department of English at Christ University, in Bangalore, India, and heads the University's Centre for Design and Innovation for Social Entrepreneurship. He has a keen interest in grassroots innovation and entrepreneurship.

He received the fastest patent granted in India in 2018 for his innovation of biodegradable straws from coconut leaves. The US and European Patent for this innovation is also approved for grants. His start-up has provided employment of over 118 women in coastal India.

Dr. Saji Varghese was invited to be part of the Hon'ble President of India's Business Delegation to Philippines in October 2019. He recently won the Global Honey Bee Network Creativity and Inclusivity Innovation Appreciation Award organised through the United Nations Development Programme.

Summary of the October 2025 Webinar

As an organisation, **[THRIVE Project](#)** endeavours to guide **[humanity](#)** towards a more **[thrivable future](#)**. We had the privilege of hosting these speakers as guest presenters for our webinar.

Saeid Zahedi -

“Good Governance, Great Innovation: Reforming Institutions to End Hunger and Poverty”

In a compelling presentation, Saeid Zahedi explored the link between innovation and the institutions behind it, and the issues that can occur when said institutions struggle from weakness, corruption, or poor coordination. To this end, it highlights how good governance is the true engine of lasting innovation, ensuring that new technologies and social solutions actually reach those most in need.

Through real world examples and policy insights, he examined how transparency, accountability, and inclusive decision making can transform innovation from isolated projects into systems of change, including through institutional reform, open data, participatory budgeting, and cross-sector collaboration. This shows how effective governance can make innovation equitable, sustainable, and effective in building a hunger and poverty-free future.

Dr. Suzie HusAin -

“Soil Intelligence: The Future of Livelihoods”

The second speaker, [Dr. Suzie Husain](#) discussed how hunger and poverty is often considered to be a lack of inputs. Thus, solutions to improving rural livelihoods often focus on input subsidies, yield boosts, and market access, which are not always effective.

She instead proposed a groundbreaking approach, soil intelligence. Through the Soil Health Expert (SHE™) Framework, farmers can be empowered to diagnose, rehabilitate, and manage their soils with precision, restoring microbial life, improving fertility naturally, and reducing chemical dependency by understanding the soil's hidden economy.

This shift doesn't just regenerate land—it regenerates agency by granting access to biological knowledge and soil literacy. This equips farmers to make data-informed decisions, monetise surplus nutrients, and access green funding through soil carbon and ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) validation.

Drawing from real-world case studies from Southeast Asia and the Global South, she demonstrated how smallholder-led soil innovation has improved crop resilience, reduced costs, and unlocked new livelihood streams. This has shown how sustainable agriculture can be reframed, not as charity, but as intelligence applied at the root.

Dr. SAJI VARGHESE - “Design Thinking and Innovation for Social Entrepreneurship”

Following our first two compelling speakers, [Dr. Saji Varghese](#) illustrated how in a large agri-based economy like India, design thinking and innovation for social entrepreneurship and sustainability holds great significance.

He guided participants through the speaker’s experiential journey of his innovation, eco-friendly drinking straws from dead, fallen coconut leaves. Dr. Saji Varghese, along with his team of students, subsequently developed simple machines to roll out these straws in a chemical-free process. These machines were deployed in remote villages in South India, where the raw material was found in abundance and was usually burnt in landfills and kitchens. Women, many of whom have never gained any opportunities for employment, were trained to use these simple machines. They were employed to roll out these straws, which are now sold globally under the Sunbird brand, granting them livelihoods while providing an eco-friendly alternative to plastic and paper straws.

The case study illustrates the need and the potential to develop eco-friendly products which not only meets the goals of environmental sustainability but also helps eliminate poverty and hunger.

Moving Forward from October 2025

The October 2025 Thrivability Matters Webinar showcased insights from Saeid Zahedi, Dr. Suzie Husain, and Dr. Saji Varghese. If you missed the live event or the Q&A session, you can view the recordings on our [YouTube](#) channel.

We also offer further Q&A insights from our speakers. They can be found below:

- [Saeid Zahedi's Q&A highlights can be found here.](#)

If you're interested in joining us after the October 2025 Thrivability Matters Webinar, there are plenty of ways to get involved. You can follow us on social media platforms such as [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#), and [Facebook](#). Additionally, you could subscribe to our [YouTube](#), listen to our [podcasts](#), join our [workshops](#), sign up for our [newsletter](#), stay up to date with our [articles](#), attend our free [webinars](#), or even join us as a [volunteer](#) to make an even greater impact on the world.

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