

COMMONWEALTH

YOUTH

AWARDS 2015



Tuesday 10th March 2015

Princess Alexandra Hall,
Royal Over-Seas House



The Commonwealth
Youth Programme

The **Commonwealth Youth Awards for Excellence in Development Work** highlight the valuable contribution that young people are making to the achievement of development goals. Young people throughout the Commonwealth are leading projects and initiatives ranging from poverty alleviation to peace building, diligently promoting and enhancing democracy and development.

The awards are presented to Commonwealth citizens aged 15–29 whose contribution to development work reflects the Commonwealth's Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment to:

- Promote youth participation in decision making
- Promote economic empowerment of young people
- Take action for equality between young women and men
- Promote peaceful and democratic environments in which human rights flourish
- Provide quality education for all
- Improve access to information and communication technology
- Promote health, development and values through sports and culture
- Engage young people to protect the environment

The awards recognise and dignify the efforts of these outstanding young people, and demonstrate to leaders and other policy makers the value and importance of young people's role in national development. Importantly, the awards also serve to inspire other young people to take action in their communities.

Development work can be within any number of key areas, such as agriculture, skills training, arts and culture, environment protection, education, health and well-being, human rights, information and communications technology, journalism and many more areas which also cover sport, science and sustainability.

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Ceremony & Reception

Programme

Welcome by MC Mr Layne Robinson

Opening remarks by H.E. Kamalesh Sharma, Commonwealth Secretary-General

Commonwealth Youth Awards Presentations

Winner – Africa & Europe Region

Cultural performance by Port Harcourt Male Ensemble

Winner – Asia Region

Cultural performance by D-Style Dance

Winner – Caribbean and Canada Region

Cultural performance by Melodians Steel Orchestra

Winner – Pacific Region

Cultural performance by Beats of Polynesia

Winner – Pan-Commonwealth Award 2015

Cultural performance by Nicola Said, Soprano

Reflection and closing remarks by Mr Deodat Maharaj, Commonwealth Deputy Secretary-General

Official photo

Reception

Ms Nakitende Catherine (age 24)Country: **Uganda**Area of Work: **Climate Change, Environment Protection**

Nakitende launched Kingfire Energy Solutions in November 2013, to provide a cleaner and cheaper alternative to coal and to tackle problems such as deforestation, waste management, limited access to energy and respiratory diseases. Created with a budget of just 1000 UGX (£000.22), the innovative business, which benefits poorer communities, won the SEED Awards for Entrepreneurship in Sustainable Development 2014.

**Ms Esther Kalenzi** (age 26)Country: **Uganda**Area of Work: **Education, Peer Education**

Esther works to improve access to education for orphans and children from poor families, through her youth-led charity 40 Days Over 40 Smiles Foundation. Her organisation has helped over 700 vulnerable children, spearheads income generating projects in slums and uses social media and social events to raise money and resources to mobilise volunteers.

**Ms Ijeoma Idika-Chima** (age 23)Country: **Nigeria**Area of Work: **Education, Peer Education**

Ijeoma founded 'Teenz Global Foundation' – an NGO that works to promote education among young people and support 'at-risk' youth. Since June 2011 Teenz Global has reached over 12,000 teenagers in Nigeria through its free guidance, counselling sessions, and provision of education support services. Ijeoma is a 2014 Young Leader and a Mandela Washington Fellow.



WINNER

Mr Julius Shirima (age 25)

Country: **Tanzania**

Area of Work: **Enterprise Development,
Youth Employment**



Noticing a high rate of unemployment amongst youth from Tanzania, in 2008 Julius decided to found Darecha, while he was still in high school. Darecha is a youth entrepreneurship organisation and micro-venture capital fund which aims to tackle youth unemployment. His company allows young Tanzanian entrepreneurs to transform their business ideas into profitable ventures that provide young people with employment opportunities. Darecha has a network of approximately 5,000 young people who have either started their own ventures or are working towards establishing one and is used as a model for youth empowerment in other countries.

Despite growing up in challenging surroundings, Julius was selected among 100 African young leaders to study at the African Leadership Academy. Whilst at the Academy, Julius showed signs of an entrepreneurial spirit, founding a school shop and a gardening community project which provided employment and volunteering opportunities for Tanzanian youth. His work in empowering young people was recognised when he received an Entrepreneurial Leadership Award from the African Leadership Academy.

Mr David Teck Chye Hoe (age 27)Country: **Singapore**Area of Work: **Education, Peer Education**

David leads on a series of initiatives to improve education and literacy for children in Singapore – including an innovative 'I Am Talented' programme to motivate students. His Straits Time Pocket Money Fund (SPMF) raises money to help children from low-income families with school-related expenses, and his mentors programme pairs secondary school pupils with University students who act as academic and social mentors. He is also the Head of the Education Committee on the Commonwealth Youth Council.

**Mr Madhav Datt** (age 18)Country: **India**Area of Work: **Climate Change, Environment Protection**

Madhav founded Green the Gene at the age of eight. A Youth Ambassador for the United Nation Environment Programme TUNZA EcoGeneration for the Asia-Pacific region, Madhav has since overseen its expansion into a 4,800 strong youth-led environmental NGO with active projects happening in 45 countries. The projects that he runs include recycling, the rehabilitation of rivers, encouraging communities to plant trees and educating school children about environmental issues.

**Mr Ravi Theja Muthu** (age 23)Country: **India**Area of Work: **Enterprise Development, Youth Employment**

Ravi is a youth leader and environmentalist, whose Climate Leaders India Network NGO raises awareness of climate change-related problems and identifies solutions – such as solar cookers and biogas digesters. Ravi, A British Council International Climate Champion, has trained more than 40,000 engineering students in India, and his 'Be The Change' Academy has supported and mentored more than 30 young people to start their own ecological business.



WINNER

Ms Gulalai Ismail (age 28)

Country: **Pakistan**

Area of Work: **Human Rights & Democracy**

In 2002, at the young age of 16, Gulalai established Aware Girls – an empowering, women-led organisation in North West Pakistan that educates young women about their human rights. North West Pakistan is under the influence of extremist religious groups such as the Taliban and young activists are seen as a threat. Despite this, Gulalai continuously strives to protect women's rights regardless of threats to her own life. 'Aware Girls' provides women with a platform for learning and advocacy and giving them the tools to work towards peace in their communities and to speak up for their rights. Gulalai has led a team of 100 female election monitors in 2013 and tackled issues such as domestic abuse and early marriages. She has also established more than 200 AIDS discussion clubs to provide girls with the education and skills to protect themselves from contracting HIV and AIDS and has created a Youth Peace Network which has 250 young peace activist members actively working to prevent young people from joining militant groups. In 2014 Gulalai received the International Humanist Award and is one of Foreign Policy Magazine's 2013 'Global Thinkers'.



Mr Marcus Kisson (age 27)Country: **Trinidad and Tobago**Area of Work: **Health & Well-Being Including HIV/AIDS**

Marcus is the National Award winner for Volunteerism in 2012. The activist, who has been campaigning for gender equality and an end to gender-based violence is one of the founding members of the Organisation for Abused and Battered Individuals (O.A.B.I). The programme has educated more than 2,000 young people in schools, vocational centres, and orphanages on child abuse, and addressed sensitive issues, including male rape.

**Mr Nevar Smith** (age 27)Country: **The Bahamas**Area of Work: **Human Rights & Democracy**

Nevar established the Bahamas Youth Movement – an advocacy organisation encouraging young people to find creative ways to bring about positive changes in their country. His pioneering youth development radio programme Youth Expressions Radio Show gives young people a platform to let their voices be heard. Nevar was awarded the Youth Leader Committed to Peace Award by the Bahamian government in 2014.

**Ms Priya Verma** (age 22)Country: **Canada**Area of Work: **Climate Change, Environment Protection**

Priya pioneered an innovative, cost-effective technology to preserve and increase precious underground water by harvesting rainwater. Her 'Increasing Underground Water Resources' project has global potential and is used to educate young people on environmental issues. A 2009 International Diana Award recipient and 2010 UN Outstanding Youth Achiever, Priya also founded the Child, Youth, Women and Environment Network www.cywe.org network, which aims to engage young people in activities that improve the environment and protect natural resources in their communities.



WINNER

Ms Nolana Lynch (age 27)

Country: **Trinidad and Tobago**

Area of Work: **Sustainable Livelihoods
And Poverty Reduction**

Nolana is a climate change and environmental sustainability advocate. She has helped to provide aid to impoverished communities and has been at the forefront of sustainable agriculture projects in several Caribbean countries. Her active involvement with NGOs started when she was 11 years old when she taught primary school classes in her community, led a soup kitchen and camps for underprivileged children. During her studies, Nolana saw the vast agricultural nutrient-rich waste discarded by farmers in her country, including millions of mango seeds and avocado seeds, the kernel of which can be used to produce cosmetic butters, an emollient-rich, nutrient-rich moisturiser with amazing effects on the skin and hair. Following this discovery, she developed an eco-friendly, all-natural skin and hair care line called 'Eco-Truffles' which uses sustainable raw materials from rural women producers throughout the Caribbean. Nolana was presented with a National Youth Award for all of her work in the environmental field over the years.



Mr Jamie Moore (age 28)

Country: **Australia**

Area of Work: **Health & Well-Being Including HIV/AIDS**

Jamie is Vice-Chair of the Australian Youth Forum and General Manager of Hello Sunday Morning – an online youth-led initiative that encourages young people to take a thoughtful and responsible attitude toward alcohol use.

Under his leadership the organisation, which was featured in the 'International Journal of Drug Policy', has provided mobile access to the programme and increased its user base from 15,000 to 35,000.



Mr Tabotabo Auatabu (age 27)

Country: **Kiribati**

Area of Work: **Peace Building**

Tabotabo tirelessly campaigns to end violence against children and improve access to education. He is a member of the Eliminating Sexual and Gender Based Violence Education Committee and delivers motivational and inspirational messages to young people. He was also the first president of the Kiribati Schools Counselling and Wellbeing Network, and introduced the concept of effective parenting styles to communities in Kiribati.



Mr Sam Johnson (age 25)

Country: **New Zealand**

Area of Work: **Climate Change, Environment Protection**

Sam is part of the Asia/Pacific Alliance for Volunteer Action for Peace and Development. Following the devastating Christchurch earthquakes, Sam used social media to mobilise over 11,000 students in New Zealand to act on disaster risk reduction. He created the Student Volunteer Army, which has

built a network of student clubs to prepare and respond to disasters and local community needs through forums and workshops.



WINNER

Ms Brianna Fruean (age 16)

Country: **Samoa**

Area of Work: **Climate Change, Environment Protection**

Brianna launched Small Voices an NGO or children's eco-group in 2010, to tackle climate change and environmental concerns at the tender age of 11. Since its launch, this initiative has spread to five other schools. Since then, she has represented the youth voice in multiple global climate change forums. She also takes the lead on practical activities engaging her community, in particular youth, in clean-up campaigns, composting, tree planting and establishing youth networks to fight against climate change in order to raise awareness of environmental problems and solutions. Brianna is the winner of a Young Environmentalist Activist 2013 award and a member of the Pacific Youth Environment network. Brianna is now in Year 12 at Robert Louis Secondary School and continues to work hard to mobilise youth, teachers, schools, families and communities to work together to combat climate change challenges.



The Commonwealth congratulates all the finalists and winners of the 2015 Commonwealth Youth Awards – an inspiring, committed group of young people.

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ADJUDICATION PANELS

Pan-Commonwealth Adjudication Panel

The Pan Commonwealth Adjudication Panel was comprised of:

- H.E Mr Nkwelle Ekaney – Cameroon High Commissioner
- Mr Dino Ayup – First Secretary, Brunei Darussalam High Commission
- Mr Sadham Zarjahan – Vice Chairperson – Partnership & Resources, Commonwealth Youth Council
- Ms Joyce Achampong – Director of External Engagement, Association of Commonwealth Universities
- Ms Katherine Ellis – Director, Youth Division, Commonwealth Secretariat

Regional Adjudication Panels

Africa Region:

Mr Stephen Jalenga – Government of Kenya (Government Representative)

Mr Messeh Leone (Commonwealth Secretariat Youth Division Representative)

Ms Lily Haritu – Youth Leader, Cameroon (Youth Representative)

Ms Angelique Pouponneau – Youth Leader, Seychelles (Youth Representative)

Mr Dan Boston – R.A.I.S.E Project, Uganda (Youth Worker Representative)

Asia Region

Ms Tharika Dileepant – Asia Region Representative (Commonwealth Youth Council Representative)

Ms Ayswarrya Ganapathiraman (Commonwealth Student Association)

Caribbean Region

Ms Melissa Bryant (Commonwealth Youth Division Representative)

Ms Tricia Teekah (Commonwealth Student Association)

Ms Tekisha Sten-Barnes – Director of Programmes, Ministry for Youth and Culture, Jamaica (Youth Worker Representative)

Pacific Region

Ms Ellie Seckold – Australian Government Representative

Ms Omnea Said (Commonwealth Youth Division Representative)

Ms Jamal Silauana Talagi (Commonwealth Student Association)

Mr Harry James Olikwailafa – Pacific Region Representative (Commonwealth Youth Council)

Ms Rebecca Solomon – Youth Worker Representative

Commonwealth Youth Award Coordinators

Mr Layne Robinson – Head of Programmes (Commonwealth Secretariat Youth Division)

Mrs Tamara Babao-Sadgrove – Assistant Programme Officer (Commonwealth Secretariat Youth Division)



ABOUT THE COMMONWEALTH YOUTH PROGRAMME

The Commonwealth Secretariat's youth development work is delivered through the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP), which has been running for over 40 years.

We engage and empower young people, provide thought leadership in youth development, and support governments, youth work professionals and young leaders to create policy and practice environments that enable young people's social, economic and political potential. We encourage the effective participation of young women and men in development processes, and promote their full engagement at all levels of decision-making, including with Heads of Government. We also showcase and celebrate the achievements of young people in driving democracy and development, to demonstrate their capabilities and inspire further action.

We place special emphasis on supporting young people to design and drive youth-led initiatives, and to have a meaningful voice with decision makers. This includes convening Youth Forums in partnership with the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings and Ministerial Meetings, as well as technical assistance and support for national, regional and global youth networks. These include:

- Commonwealth Youth Council
- Commonwealth Students Association
- Commonwealth Alliance of Young Entrepreneurs
- Commonwealth Youth Climate Change Network
- Commonwealth Youth Sport for Development and Peace Working Group
- Commonwealth Correspondents

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