

4 African finalists make the shortlist for Commonwealth Youth Awards 2020

The 16 finalists in this year's Commonwealth Youth Awards, including innovators, activists and entrepreneurs from 12 countries, have been announced. All will each receive a trophy, a certificate and £1,000 to expand the scope of their projects.



Image source: thecommonwealth.org

This year, the awards received more than 500 entries from 40 countries. Of those shortlisted, the top candidate from each region will be named as a regional winner. One of these four regional winners will become the Commonwealth Young Person of the Year 2020. The regional winners will each earn a trip to London to attend the awards ceremony on 11 March 2020 and will receive £3,000. The overall pan-Commonwealth winner will take home a total of £5,000.

The judging panel included high commissioners, development experts and youth leaders from across the Commonwealth. The awards recognise outstanding young people whose innovative projects have made a real impact in helping their countries achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

"Their talent paired with tangible solutions sends a strong signal that they should be equal partners in the development agenda, not passive allies," said Commonwealth head of social policy development Layne Robinson.



The 2020 finalists are:

Africa and Europe

Joshua Ebin (Nigeria)

Focus: SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production

Ebin is the founder of 'Jumela Limited', an agro-technology venture which specialises in the production of plant-based compost and novel agro-products for crop production farmers in Nigeria. The venture aims to tackle poor food waste management, pollution problems and low agricultural yield in the country. The venture has so far produced two metric tonnes of compost for sale to national clients and created jobs for more than 25 workers.

Galabuzi Brian Kakembo (Uganda)

Focus: SDG 8 - Decent Work and Economic Growth

Kakembo is the founder of 'WEYE Clean Energy', a social enterprise that produces and sells eco-friendly briquettes (blocks of compressed charcoal) made from biodegradable plastics and organic waste to home, schools and local institutions. Profits are used to fund community outreach programmes and training for young people and women in smart agriculture. The enterprise's work has reached more than 800 women and young people of which 600 are now earning income from briquette making or plastic waste recycling.

Salvatory Kessy (Tanzania)

Focus: SDG 4 - Quality Education

Kessy is the founder of 'SmartClass', an online platform which matches low-cost qualified and vetted tutors to students interested in learning basic skills such as numeracy, literacy, computing, agriculture and languages. The offline platform allows users to book face-to-face tuition through a text and the group tuition model allows learners to book tutors collectively and reduce costs. The platform has 5,000 active registered tutors and 20,000 learners in Tanzania.

Elizabeth Wanjiru Wathuti (Kenya)

Focus: SDG 13 – Climate Action

Wathuti is the founder of the 'Green Generation Initiative' which focuses on promoting environmental education and food security in schools, particularly by encouraging a tree growing culture and through its 'adopt-a-tree' campaign. The initiative has so far helped plant 30,000 tree seedlings in more than 40 schools. In addition, more than 20,000 school children have been trained to be environmentally conscious across seven Kenyan counties.



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Asia

Sheikh Inzamamuzzaman (Bangladesh)

Focus: SDG 4 – Quality Education

Inzamamuzzaman is the founder of 'Study Buddy', a startup that provides an alternative learning platform to children with learning difficulties and their parents. Using interactive approaches such as augmented reality and gaming, the platform conducts personal assessments to match each child with unique learning methodologies and then connects the child with relevant learning tools and special needs professionals. The programme has so far supported more than 800 children and more than 1000 parents.

Vedant Jain (India)

Focus: SDG 4 – Quality Education

Jain is a co-founder of the 'Labhya Foundation', a non-profit that aims to equip children from low socio-economic with critical social and emotional skills. In partnership with the national government and partnered non-governmental organisations, the foundation co-created the 'Happiness Curriculum' to educate children in schools on universal human values, emotional wellbeing and mindfulness, and to enhance their critical thinking and soft skills. The curriculum has so far positively impacted more than 1 million students in more than 20,000 schools in India.

Jaya Rajwani (Pakistan)

Focus: SDG 5 – Gender Equality

Rajwani is the technical lead for 'Aurat Raaj'; a social enterprise which creates technology-based products and services to educate girls on health, hygiene and safety. Jaya has led the development of the enterprise's chat-bot, a tool which uses artificial intelligence to provide young girls with accessible and non-judgmental information on reproductive health. Jaya's work has seen the ongoing development of the chat-bot to include local languages and videos while in-school training workshops have helped increase the tool's reach and impact.

Hafiz Usama Tanveer (Pakistan)

Focus: SDG 6 – Clean Water and Sanitation

Tanveer is the founder of 'PakVitae'; a social enterprise that produces and supplies water treatment products to provide clean and accessible drinking water to rural communities and refugee camps in Pakistan. PakVitae has so far reached over 11,000 people including victims of the Kerala flood, Afghan refugee camps and remote schools in rural areas.

Caribbean and Canada

Lalita Gopaul (Guyana)

Focus: SDG 13 – Climate Action

Gopaul is an environmental sustainability activist and researcher by profession. Her research work covers eco-friendly agricultural methods, clean energy solutions and green technologies which have been used in Guyana. Her work has educated more than 100 farmers in the country to adopt more sustainable and environmentally-friendly farming methods to boost production and improve livelihoods in a changing climate. Gopaul is also the founder of 'Eco Club' which mentors young people on environmental education. The club also runs coastal clean-up activities, tree planting sessions and climate-action walks.

Sowmyan Jegatheesan (Canada)**Focus:** SDG 15 - Life on Land

Jegatheesan is the founder of 'SystemaNaturae.org'; one of the largest online information sources for global wildlife projects, research and datasets. The platform creates awareness and helps communities build resilience by better understanding global activities around climate change, migration patterns and human-wildlife conflict through the sourced material. The platform has reached more than 100 countries and has been used by research centres, think tanks and universities across the world.

Stephen McCubbin (Jamaica)**Focus:** SDG 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

McCubbin is the founder of 'Cheer Sensation JA'; a youth non-profit which works to foster holistic development through the sport of cheer. Through its cheerleading programmes and competitions, the organisation provides a safe space for children and adults to become physically active whilst working as a violence prevention tool in volatile communities in Jamaica. McCubbin's work has enabled him to attract international cheerleading bodies to Jamaica to provide technical support to the organisation, further increasing awareness and support for the sport.

Samuel Neil (Jamaica)**Focus:** SDG 4 – Quality Education

Neil is the founder of 'The Aviation Club of Jamaica', a national initiative which encourages young people to enter the aviation sector. The programme provides student members with scholarship opportunities and training programmes through its partnerships with training institutions. The programme has introduced hundreds of local young people to the world of aviation and supported many to go on to become qualified aviation professionals.

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Pacific

Sagufta Janif (Fiji)**Focus:** SDG 12 – Responsible consumption and production

Janif is the founder of 'The Fusion Hub', a social enterprise focused on addressing a lack of access to proper waste disposal methods in remote islands by upcycling waste materials and selling them as furniture, home items and accessories. The Fusion Hub has so far upcycled more than 400 tonnes of waste selling hundreds of items to clients. The Hub also employs single mothers giving them a sustainable livelihood and has helped set up two formal businesses that are now part of its supply chain.

Broderick John Mervyn (Fiji)**Focus:** SDG 16 - Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

Mervyn is the current president of 'Ignite4Change', a youth-led initiative which works to empower and educate underprivileged women and youths to grow inclusive governance, equality, participation and cultural preservation within local communities. The initiative runs several programmes including on public speaking training, local governance awareness, climate change advocacy, youth leadership and the protection of the Rotuman Language and Heritage.

Rinesh Sharma (Fiji)

Focus: SDG 2 – Zero Hunger

Sharma is the founder of 'Smart Farms Fiji', an initiative that aims to provide a sustainable food production system by growing fruits and vegetables in a controlled environment all year round. The Smart Farm system's produce is monitored through smartphone technology and saves up to 70% more water than traditional farming methods. Smart Farms Fiji also runs the country's first hydroponics course that teaches local communities to embrace modern farming practices.

Fusi Masina Tietie (Samoa)

Focus: SDG 5 - Gender Equality

Tietie is the founder of 'Her Voice', an online initiative that aims to empower young women in the local community by sharing their personal stories through art and videography. The project works in partnership with volunteer photographers, make-up artists, bloggers and fashion designers to curate each young woman's story and share to Her Voice's online community. Fusi also provides national training to young women on leadership and gender equality.

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