



COMMONWEALTH  
SCHOLARSHIPS

# NEWS

Promoting learning, development and co-operation

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Directions of change –  
addressing inequality  
in society

OUR SCHOLARS AND FELLOWS · BENEFITS OF INTERNATIONALISATION · NEWS ROUND-UP  
OUR ALUMNI · T&F COMMONWEALTH SCHOLAR BEST JOURNAL ARTICLE PRIZE · NETWORKS AND EVENTS



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Bill and Melinda Gates – the world's greatest philanthropists – when asked why they give billions of dollars to help people in poor countries, respond by saying that the geography of a person's birth is mere chance and should not determine what they can access in terms of healthcare, education, and other opportunities. This, to me, is the essence of 'equality': giving everyone a fair chance. Yet huge inequalities still exist in our world today, be they because of geography of birth, gender, ethnicity, or disability. For example, for every 1,000 babies born in Norway, 997 can expect to survive to the age of five, but only 822 Malian babies will survive to that age. In 2010, only around 16% of ministerial positions were occupied by women, and only two countries had achieved gender equality at all levels of education.

Does the pursuit of equality mean that we should not celebrate cultural differences and diversity? No; I believe that every society is enriched by diversity – of race, culture, and views. In the UK, Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows play an important role in bringing this diversity not only into academia, but also into wider society. Differences in views, outlooks, cultures, and ways of addressing social issues all contribute to advancement in science and society. Equally, Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows are enriched by their interaction with UK academics, the general public, and the diversity of the student population.

Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows play important roles in addressing equality and diversity through their study programmes and when they return to their countries. Many are studying how to improve access to healthcare and social services for under-served people, including the very poor and those with disabilities, how to combat gender inequality, and the elimination of gender-based violence. Other recent research topics include how local policymakers can work with community-based organisations to improve the wellbeing of people who live in informal urban settlements in Africa and Asia; how poor families struggling to have fewer children might be supplied with information about services and contraception of their choice; and how global phenomena such as climate fluctuations and economic downturns are having an impact on the poorest in remote parts of the continent.

In this issue of *Commonwealth Scholarships News*, we focus on the work of our Scholars, Fellows and alumni with disadvantaged groups. For example, we hear how our alumni are using practical experiences from their awards to widen access to healthcare, education, and democracy. Current Scholars also explain how they tackle issues arising from disability, and discuss charitable activities aimed at increasing access to education and healthcare.

The CSC is trying its hardest to address inequality in access to our scholarships and fellowships. For example, the Commission has worked steadily to ensure that the proportion of awards made to qualified female candidates compared to male candidates is roughly the same. The continued success of such efforts is dependent on our receiving nominations of highly-qualified candidates for our awards regardless of their sex, disability status, religion, and ethnic background. In a fair society, these should not matter.

## Professor Nyovani Madise

Commonwealth Scholarship Commissioner 2008-2014

Professor of Demography and Social Statistics and Associate Dean (Research and Enterprise), Faculty of Social and Human Sciences, University of Southampton



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# NEWS ROUND-UP



**Dr Nick Brown,**  
*Commonwealth Scholarship  
Commissioner*



**Sarah Laessig,**  
*Commonwealth Scholarship  
Commissioner*



**Sofia Apollonov,**  
*Programme Officer at the  
CSC Secretariat*



**Juliette Hargreave,**  
*Programme Officer at the  
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**Matt Mawer,** *Programme  
Officer (Evaluation) at the  
CSC Secretariat*

## NEW COMMISSIONERS

The CSC is delighted to welcome five new members of the Commission, who started their terms on 1 May 2014.

Sandy Balfour is CEO of the Canon Collins Educational and Legal Assistance Trust. Sandy has worked as a television producer and director, and was founding Chair of Divine Chocolate, which is majority-owned by small-scale farmers in Ghana. He is also Chair of its sister company, Liberation Foods.

Dr Nick Brown is Principal of Linacre College, Oxford. Nick was a Lecturer in Forestry at the University of Oxford from 1994-2010, and a Lecturer in Environmental Sciences at the University of Manchester from 1990-1994.

Professor David Cope is a Visiting Professor at Clare Hall, University of Cambridge. His previous positions include Director of the UK Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology, and Professor of Energy and Resource Economics at Doshisha University, Japan.

Sarah Laessig is an Advisor to the Board of Crecera Finance Management, and Treasurer and Member of the Board of the Wharton Club of the UK. Previously, she was Industry Head for Public Sector for Transaction Services for Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA).

Mark H Robson is Head of Statistics and Regulatory Data at the Bank of England. Mark has worked for organisations in the public and private sectors, including the London School of Economics, KPMG, OECD, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

## NEW APPOINTMENTS AT THE SECRETARIAT

Sofia Apollonov has joined the Secretariat as Programme Officer. She was previously a volunteer at the National Disaster Management Office in Vanuatu. Sofia graduated with a BA in Development Studies and Political Science from the Australian National University in 2011, where she subsequently worked as Coursework Scholarships Officer.

Juliette Hargreave has joined the Secretariat as Programme Officer. She was previously Secretary, International Relations at the Bar Council of England and Wales. Juliette has a BA in French and Spanish from the University of Leeds, and an MSc Medical, Scientific and Technical Translation from Imperial College London.

Matt Mawer has joined the Secretariat as Programme Officer (Evaluation). Matt was previously a Postdoctoral Researcher at King's College London and a part-time Lecturer and Researcher in Psychology at Coventry University, where he recently completed his PhD in Higher Education.

## OBITUARIES

### Professor Lorna Casselton CBE (1938-2014)

Professor Lorna Casselton was a Commonwealth Scholarship Commissioner from 2012-2014. She brought a great sense of fun, energy, and wisdom, and a deep commitment to all of our Scholars and Fellows. She will particularly be remembered for the warmth of her smile when talking with new Scholars at the Welcome Programme, or in small group work with PhD students at one of our events at Cumberland Lodge.

Lorna was a distinguished scientist, whose research had focused on sexual development in fungi. After



**Lorna Casselton,** *Commonwealth Scholarship  
Commissioner 2012-2014*

becoming Professor of Genetics at Queen Mary, University of London in 1989, she moved to the University of Oxford in 1991, where she became Professor of Fungal Genetics. In 1993 she became a Fellow of St Cross College, Oxford (and an Honorary Fellow there upon her retirement). Lorna was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1999, and was twice a member of its Council; in 2006, she became Vice President and Foreign Secretary. In the Queen's Birthday Honours List 2012, she was appointed Commander of the British Empire (CBE) for services to fungal genetics and international science.

No one could meet Lorna without being charmed and energised by her infectious commitment to science, and to the training of a new generation of scholars and scientists.

### Peter Hetherington OBE (1930-2013)

Peter Hetherington was Joint Secretary of the CSC from 1985-1993. He joined the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) in 1957 and oversaw the expansion of its Appointments Department, assisting in the recruitment of staff for universities across the Commonwealth. Following his appointment as Deputy Secretary General of the ACU and Joint Secretary of the CSC in 1985, the Commonwealth Scholarships grew and flourished under his supervision and leadership, and continued to do so since his retirement at the end of 1993.

In 1994, Peter was honoured with the Order of the British Empire (OBE) for his service to the ACU; in 1995, the ACU gave him its highest award, the Symons Medal. It was typical of his modesty that colleagues only found out at his funeral that Peter was also awarded the Benemerenti medal – which is in the gift of the Pope – ‘for his great contribution to the Church and to church music’.

Peter was totally committed to the values of the Commonwealth and all that they embrace: respect for the dignity of the individual, equality of access to quality education, and gender equity.



# OUR SCHOLARS AND FELLOWS

*Three Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows describe how they are working towards a more equitable and just world.*



**Skye Martin**, 2013 Commonwealth Scholar from South Africa

## GENDER STUDIES, THE ARTS, AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Skye Martin is a 2013 Commonwealth Scholar from South Africa. She is studying for a Master's degree in Gender and Women's Studies and English at Lancaster University. Skye's degree programme is interdisciplinary, and draws on feminist theory from cultural and media studies, sociology and literature.

'Over the last few decades, gender studies has been at the forefront of discussions about how we understand identity and power in relation to bodies. Debates about race, class and sexuality have all been tied to the ways in which we think about gender. It is of particular interest to me how these debates have made their way into textual representations of women, and how contemporary world literatures are reflecting these issues.'

Skye believes that gender needs to be prioritised in the struggle for social justice, equality and freedom. 'Women make up more than half of the world's population but are still systematically and economically disadvantaged, and are subject to incredible levels of violence and abuse on a daily basis. Across the globe, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people face discrimination because of their sexuality and gender identities. In order to address all other forms of inequality, it is essential that we look to this formative system of power and difference. Interdisciplinary gender studies, with its emphasis on the ways in which gender is related to systems of power and representation, has a valuable role to play in this.'

'I hope that upon my return I will be able to use the skills and knowledge that I have acquired here to participate in the growth of gender studies in South Africa, particularly with regard to the arts. By helping to shape the ways in which gender is talked about, I hope to create positive social change, and contribute to a national culture of rigorous intellectual debate and identity-based analysis. Through my writing and teaching I aim to continue to advocate for women's and LGBTI rights and to look at the role of performance and literature in achieving this.'

## ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE AND THE RIGHT TO VOTE IN AFRICAN PRISONS

Chrisantus Makokha is a 2013 Commonwealth Professional Fellow from Kenya. His Fellowship was hosted by the African Prisons Project, a charity working to improve the welfare of prisoners in African countries through education, health, and justice.



**Chrisantus Makokha**, 2013 Commonwealth Professional Fellow at the African Prisons Project

The right to access health care services was one of the key issues discussed during Chrisantus' Fellowship. 'Both national and international legislation is clear with regard to prisoners' access to health care. According to the Constitution of Kenya, every person has the right to the highest attainable standard of health care. Internationally, United Nations regulations for the treatment of offenders require all institutions to provide at least one qualified medical officer, who should have some knowledge of psychiatry.'

'In Kenya, the Ministry of Health provides health workers and medicines for prisons. To supplement this, the Kenya Prisons Service employs doctors and other health workers who join the service as prison officers. However, they do not put on prison uniforms to ensure trust from the prisoners.'

For Chrisantus, there is a debate over whether this dual role of prison officer and medical staff may lead to the mistreatment of prisoners. 'The big question is whether having prison officers in health care roles compromises prisoners' access to services. The Kenyan case has been a success, with the prison officers in health care being non-discriminatory towards prisoners. However, employing medical staff as prison officers should be a last resort.'

Chrisantus also explored prisoners' rights to vote. 'An argument has been fronted that people who violate the law should not participate in voting for legislators. The Constitution of Kenya states that a person who is imprisoned retains all the rights and fundamental freedoms in the Bill of Rights, except to the extent that any particular right or a fundamental freedom is clearly incompatible with the fact that the person is imprisoned. In accordance with this, recent court cases have ruled that prisoners do have the right to vote.' He hopes that, although prisoners in Kenya did not vote in the last general election due to logistical issues, they will vote in the coming and future elections. 'This should be the common practice globally.'

## EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY FOR LGBTIQ PEOPLE IN MALAWI

Alan Msosa, a 2013 Commonwealth Scholar from Malawi, is pursuing a PhD in Human Rights at the University of Essex. Alan's research focuses on the societal and institutional factors that influence the lack of promotion and protection of human rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and questioning (LGBTIQ) people in Malawi.

'Recent times have seen regression in the progress made to promote and protect the human rights of LGBTIQ people in Africa. For example, Nigeria and Uganda have recently passed draconian anti-gay laws, and there is increasing anti-gay rhetoric being used in countries such as Malawi, Zimbabwe, Kenya, and Cameroon. The claim is that LGBTIQ identities and practices should not be tolerated because they are alien to the cultural and religious beliefs of Africans.'

Alan argues that some of the factors contributing to this belief include both political and institutional

# IN YOUR OWN WORDS

2011 Commonwealth Distance Learning Scholar **Ronald Kasule** explains his work on the inclusion of children with disabilities in the Ugandan education system.

The world cannot afford the price of stepping aside only to watch the education and participation rights of millions of people with disabilities denied.



**Alan Msosa**, 2013 Commonwealth Scholar at the University of Essex

reluctance to challenge the rejection of LGBTIQ people, as well as the existence of colonial anti-gay criminal laws. 'Consequently, any debate or dialogue on the issue doesn't lead to sustainable and practical resolution, and the affected people face both psychological and physical violence from society and its institutions.

'The first paradigm shift that Africa needs to confront is to accept that African societies have coexisted with LGBTIQ people since time immemorial. Governments and concerned stakeholders therefore need to consider the problem objectively, to facilitate dialogue aimed at finding sustainable positive solutions, and to refrain from rhetoric. Local mechanisms with the potential to facilitate this discussion are already available.'

Alan identifies a number of legal commissions within Malawi which already have the power to review laws and conduct public enquiries in relation to same-sex identities and practices in the country. 'Equally important, however, is the need for academics and researchers to develop interest in the area in order to generate knowledge for context-specific solutions.'

Alan's research will present real stories and analyse debates from the local media. 'Documenting evidence of same-sex practices and homophobia in Malawi, the research will recommend the strengthening of institutional mechanisms to advance human rights for the affected people through legal reform, structured strategic dialogue, and encouraging positive self-awareness.'

Until recently, it was wrongfully believed that people with disabilities did not need education, since they were not expected to lead independent lives. This kind of attitude was further manifested in the inaccessible structural design of physical environments. However, the international community, through a series of legal frameworks and standards, has stressed the inalienable rights that people with disabilities have to education and social inclusion.

As part of my Master's programme in Educational Planning, Economics, and International Development at the Institute of Education, University of London, I undertook a study to examine the influence of global standards and legal frameworks in addressing the learning needs of children with disabilities in Uganda. The study aimed to find out the extent of influence that the international standards and legal frameworks have had on local education policy.

Three main themes were considered: international influence on the education rights of children with disabilities, dilemmas and challenges for the national education system, and the possibilities and opportunities for the future education rights of children with disabilities. Study participants included Members of Parliament, officers from the Ministry of Education, classroom teachers, representatives from civil society, parents' representatives, and adults with disabilities.

The findings showed that progressive ideas characteristic of international legal frameworks had been applied to the local education system to derive an education policy in Uganda sensitive to the learning needs of children with disabilities. It also demonstrated that basic human rights, including the right to education, have been coded in statutory instruments.

However, most disability-specific legal provisions showed a huge implementation gap – an implication that policy formulation and implementation have been driven by politics rather than rational planning, with the absence of sufficient data, and structural and organisational reforms to develop capacity to accommodate children with disabilities in education.

The challenge is not to do with the absence of appropriate policies and/or laws, but implementation. The overriding implication is that the onus hinges on individual states to make human rights norms a reality. But what should happen if a state is not willing or able to put that process into practice, as seems the case in some African states? Obviously, the world cannot afford the price of stepping aside only to watch the education and participation rights of millions of people with disabilities denied; but what can the global community do to bring about the enforcement of education rights and social inclusion while respecting the principle of nation-state sovereignty?

# FIGHTING FOR DISABILITY RIGHTS IN MALAYSIA

*Aizan Sofia Amin is a 2010 Commonwealth Scholar completing a PhD in Disability Studies at the University of Glasgow. Here, she writes about her research and personal experience in working towards equality for disabled people in her home country, Malaysia.*

Ever since I became disabled 15 years ago as a result of bone cancer and right leg amputation, I have wanted to help others with disabilities. Not only because I have had to use crutches since then, but also because I know how it feels to be disabled in Malaysia. At the tender age of 16, I learned that my life would never be the same and my whole world completely changed. I cried a lot, not because I had lost my leg, but due to the unbearable structural barriers and prejudices of the society around me. It is not physical limitation that restricts disabled people, but inaccessible infrastructures and negative attitudes. I therefore decided to pursue a career in counselling to empower those living with disabilities.

During my counselling internship at a vocational centre for disabled people in Malaysia, I came across countless sad stories. Many of the people I met shared awful experiences of being stigmatised and discriminated against in society. One wheelchair user revealed that she had to quit schooling at the age of 13 because the school failed to provide classrooms on the ground floor. As a result, she ended up at the vocational centre to do a tailoring course, despite her dream to become a teacher. In another case, a boy without both arms described how he wanted to support his poor family, yet no one was willing to employ him. These environmental barriers and discriminatory attitudes prevented them from gaining wider access to economic and social participation. Consequently, I felt that it would be futile to empower disabled people if the welfare state and society would not allow this empowerment to happen.

I soon realised that counselling alone was not enough and made the crucial life decision to switch my career from counselling to academia, joining the Department of Social Work at the National University of Malaysia. It was my belief that only through achieving expertise in Disability Studies would I be able to support disabled people on a larger scale – via research and advocacy. The CSC helped me to truly realise my vision and, in September 2010, I arrived at the University of Glasgow to undertake a PhD in Disability Studies at the Strathclyde Centre for Disability Research.

The prospect of pursuing a PhD in the UK was an eye-opener for me. I was amazed at how the CSC and the Disability Service at my university provided incredible support to disabled students. This was a completely different experience from that which I had encountered in my home country. Had I not been given this opportunity, I would never have realised how disability support can be delivered to disabled students. I felt empowered and respected. I want this to be implemented in Malaysia too.

Although disability welfare in Malaysia has substantially improved over the past 20 years, it still has a long way to go. Previous disability research in Malaysia, albeit inadequate, found that disabled people are still subjected to manifold barriers in their daily encounters. Malaysia enacted the Persons with Disabilities Act (PWDA) in 2008 and, in 2010, signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). However, since then, many disabled people are still marginalised from equal participation in society. This, it is argued,

is due to the absence of any penalty for non-compliance with the PWDA and accordingly it serves as mere documentation. Malaysia therefore needs changes to its disability policies and legislation. It should introduce a disability discrimination act to ensure that the principles highlighted by the UNCRPD can be established and that the rights of disabled people are recognised.

The World Health Organization estimates that over one billion people in the world have some form of disability, and 80% of them live in developing countries like Malaysia. Disability is found to be more common among the poor and among women, and abundant research has found that disabled women experience significant barriers and discrimination in terms of access to healthcare, education and training, employment, marriage and motherhood, and violence and abuse. Nevertheless, little is known of the experiences of disabled women in Malaysia due to a scarcity of disability and gender research.

Whilst the importance of gender equality is recognised at the local and international level, gender disparity is still prevalent in Malaysia. Women in Malaysia are still bound to traditional gender roles that restrict their wider access to public life, and those who are economically active may be subject to gender discrimination. There is some evidence to suggest that men may have more power than women, and that females in Malaysian families remain in a secondary position. Differences relating to gender and culture can therefore have a profound impact on disabled women, who may find themselves subject to both disability and





**Aizan Sofia Amin**, 2010 Commonwealth Scholar at the University of Glasgow

**Had I not been given this opportunity, I would never have realised how disability support can be delivered to disabled students. I want this to be implemented in Malaysia too.**

Malaysian society used to perceive disabled people as objects of 'pity', which has undermined their rights to equal access to economic and social activities. For example, if a disabled person manages to secure employment, people are more likely to associate it with their disability status rather than their individual merit. These negative attitudes towards disabled people may extend into all aspects of life, as one of my research participants describes:

*I have always known myself as a disabled [person]. I don't know whether it's my mistake that I want to prove to society that I am not disabled. But at the same time people take advantage of me... So, I find that I am wrong. I am wrong. I want to give up my hope. I don't want to live in my dreams anymore. I want to give up... No matter how hard we try to prove to people that we want to change our lives, it will not work. Disabled people will always remain disabled. We will always be disabled!*

gender inequality. I therefore conducted my PhD research on disabled women in Malaysia, focusing on their lived experiences. I spent six months in Malaysia and interviewed 33 women with physical impairments, across three different ethnic groups of Malay, Chinese, and Indian. It was a remarkable experience to learn how these women persistently faced multiple challenges in many aspects of their lives, in both public and private domains.

Findings from my research demonstrate that the majority of these women experience significant barriers not only because of their disability, but also due to their gender status and poverty. These

women have a constant struggle to be included in the family and society because of inaccessible infrastructures at home and in healthcare settings, schools, colleges, universities, workplaces and public buildings, as well as stigma and discrimination in pursuing their right to family life, through marriage and motherhood. They are constantly 'rejected' by their families, prospective partners' families, friends, teachers, employers and even strangers, for being both disabled and female. As such, for many of them, life is a constant battle to prove that they are independent beings and active agents, in a Malaysian society which is both restrictive and patriarchal.

Such prejudiced attitudes towards disabled people not only deny their right to public life, but also undermine their psycho-emotional wellbeing, causing them to experience unbearable physical and emotional distress.

The effort to foster equal participation for disabled people in Malaysia undeniably still has long way to go. Disabled people will only achieve their emancipation if their right to an equal life is recognised at the state level. It is therefore pivotal to implement a disability discrimination act in Malaysia, as well as focusing on the empowerment of disabled women.

# THE BENEFITS OF INTERNATIONALISATION FOR UK UNIVERSITIES

*How does increasing international engagement benefit UK universities?*

*Jocelyn Law considers answers to this question from different perspectives.*

For more than 50 years, Commonwealth Scholarships and Fellowships have enabled students and mid-career academics to pursue study at a UK university. The importance of bilateral exchange underpins this scheme and, in the same way, it is important to recognise that the benefits are felt not only by Commonwealth citizens studying in the UK, but also their host universities and wider communities.

The UK university sector is a diverse educational environment. Of a student population of 2,340,275 students enrolled at higher education institutions in the UK in 2012-2013, 425,265 were students from outside the UK visiting to study.

A recent report published by the UK Department for Business, Innovation and Skills identified the internationally diverse nature of UK universities. International (non-EU) UK university alumni provide 'striking testimony' of the opportunity to interact with students from all over the world. As a result, there is an increased sensitivity towards other cultural perspectives and an improved ability to understand and communicate with people from a wide range of national and social backgrounds. These are characteristics of global citizenship, which will help students to work in any region.

## **STUDYING FOR A UK QUALIFICATION OVERSEAS – THE OVERSEAS CAMPUS**

Professor Christine Ennew is Provost of the University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus. She believes that the concept of internationalisation for UK universities has changed in the past decade.

'It has become a much broader and all-embracing concept – one which focuses on developing an international perspective on all of a university's activities. Of course incoming international students are important (as are international staff), but so is an internationally-relevant curriculum and an international experience for students.'

The University of Nottingham has a number of degree programmes with a period of international study 'built in'. This model was traditionally a feature of language degrees, but the university now offers programmes



**Professor Christine Ennew**, Provost of the University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus

in international relations, business, and law where students are required to spend a year abroad to expose them to different perspectives and ideas and to give a real international feel to their programme of study.

Having different international campuses also provides an additional dimension, as Christine explains. 'We have three-way mobility options as a consequence of having campuses in China and Malaysia, so a student from the UK could study for one semester in China and one semester in Malaysia. Similarly a student from China could undertake a semester's study in Malaysia and a semester in the UK.' There are many benefits to this kind of mobility; students gain a very diverse set of experiences while remaining within a common academic framework, reducing concerns about course equivalence and credit transfer.

## **STUDYING BY DISTANCE LEARNING**

Dr Katie Reed, Programme Director for the Master's in Public Health course at the University of Manchester, says that the university places great importance on widening access to higher education for students in other countries. 'The Equity and

Merit Scholarship scheme was introduced several years ago to help bring postgraduate students from developing countries to Manchester.'

In addition, Katie and her colleagues support distance learning study, enabling students – including Commonwealth Distance Learning Scholars – to pursue University of Manchester courses without the need for them to leave their family and work commitments. The university ensures staff-student interaction on these courses through two-day workshops in the students' countries each year, covering skills and planning issues and having one-to-one meetings. Katie, who has lived and worked in countries in sub-Saharan Africa, believes that it is important for her staff to have direct experience of their students' study environments. Student feedback that some online materials were difficult to access led to them being posted on YouTube to make access easier.

Charles Nwosi (2011 Commonwealth Distance Learning Scholar from Nigeria, MSc Public Health, University of Manchester) is a medical doctor who has put the skills that he has learnt on his course



to immediate use in his work. He found the public health care module of the course very relevant, with the sessions on motivating and supporting health care workers helping him achieve an increase in HIV service uptake.

The university recognises that students on distance learning courses will have differing expectations. Some will want to progress to PhD study, while others view the course as enhancing their vocational skills needed for work. Distance learning also enables female students to maintain and enhance their careers, as they are able to keep their current employment while studying.

Research carried out by Katie and her colleagues has shown that students on an online distance learning programme benefit from learning alongside international students, through learning about the experiences of health professionals and health systems in other countries. Charles has also benefitted from the international contacts he has made through his course. 'The distance approach to learning at the University of Manchester has allowed me to advance my career and broaden my professional network as well.'

### LINKING COMMUNITIES

Dr Inalegwu Oono is a 2013 Commonwealth Scholar from Nigeria, studying for a PhD in Public Health Immunology at Newcastle University. He also coordinates the CSC North East Regional Network for Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows in the UK. Inalegwu says that this role is important in strengthening the relationship between Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows and their local areas and communities. 'I have enjoyed this fantastic opportunity to serve, and have put together events to explore the rich history of the UK, including trips to Segedunum Roman Fort and the JORVIK Viking Festival in York.'

Inalegwu also leads the activities of TAI, a registered charity which aims to address inequality in African societies through research, advocacy, education, publications, community projects, and quality healthcare services ([taiworld.org](http://taiworld.org)). Formed in 2010, the charity's achievements so far include setting up a mentoring scheme, establishing school clubs in Nigeria, training professionals through a sister UK charity, and campaigns linked to World AIDS Day. TAI's work has also helped create links between the UK and the African countries it serves; for example, over half of the charity's mentors live in the UK. As part of promoting African heritage and fostering cultural diversity, TAI is planning an event in London this December, to showcase its mentoring initiative and display African arts and entertainment.

### COLLABORATING ON RESEARCH

Dr Lami Nnamonu (2008 Commonwealth Split-site Scholar from Nigeria, PhD Chemistry, Federal University of Agriculture, Makurdi and University of Durham) has found that her scholarship experience continues to enrich her work. Academically, Lami's



**Commonwealth Scholars** at St Mary's Abbey, York, UK

twelve months of research in the UK came at a crucial moment in her PhD. 'I was exposed to several avant-garde techniques in chemical analysis and had hands-on experience with facilities and equipment I had not used before.' Her doctoral thesis was named 'Best in Physical Sciences in the Nigerian University System during 2011' in the Nigerian Universities Doctoral Theses Award Scheme.

Lami is currently a Senior Lecturer in Chemistry and Acting Director of the Centre for Agrochemical Technology at the Federal University of Agriculture, Makurdi. She has used her knowledge to increase the use of environmentally-responsible chemical use in agriculture, and teach postgraduate students in the field.

As well as enhancing her scientific skills, Lami took the opportunity to become very involved in community life while in Durham, including helping to raise money for autistic children, and participating in an environmental scheme to reduce carbon footprints. Lami continues to stay in touch with friends and academic colleagues from Durham.

Dr Aweeda Newaj-Fyzul (2005 Commonwealth Split-site Scholar from Trinidad and Tobago, PhD Fish Disease and Pathology, University of the West Indies and Heriot-Watt University) is also still benefiting from the contacts she made during her time in the UK, as she continues to collaborate on projects with her UK university supervisor.



**Dr Lami Nnamonu**, 2008 Commonwealth Split-site Scholar from Nigeria

Aweeda now runs her own aquaculture business, Agriquatics, which works towards improving sustainable food production and provides training and fieldwork opportunities for students. Aweeda is also a teacher for the Ministry of Food Production's Agriculture Now programme 'Without my Commonwealth Scholarship none of this would have been possible,' says Aweeda. 'There are no aquaculture Master's or PhD degrees offered in the Caribbean. We are working towards this for the future.'

### FURTHER READING

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# OUR ALUMNI

## Alumni news

### COMMONWEALTH SCHOLAR APPOINTED AMBASSADOR TO SOMALIA



**David Angell, 1986**  
Commonwealth Scholar and  
Canadian High Commissioner  
and Ambassador

David Angell (1986 Commonwealth Scholar from Canada, MPhil International Relations, University of Cambridge) has been appointed as Canada's first Ambassador to Somalia in more than 20 years. David is also currently High Commissioner to Kenya (where he is based), Rwanda, and Uganda.

### SHARING EXPERTISE TO STRENGTHEN GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT



**Daljeet Kaur, 2010**  
Commonwealth Shared  
Scholar from India

Daljeet Kaur (2010 Commonwealth Shared Scholar from India, MSc Environmental and Sustainable Development, University College London) is Senior Programme Manager at the Knowledge Partnership Programme (KPP). The KPP envisages production and dissemination of high-quality research and analysis products,

sharing Indian and global evidence on policies that impact development outcomes and supporting advocacy towards strengthening policy design and implementation. The KPP, which is funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID), will support a range of activities from analytical work to events such as conferences and incoming and outgoing expert visits. It will also provide small grants to partners such as think tanks, NGOs and private sector organisations.

### COLLABORATION WITH HOST IMPROVES MATERNITY SERVICES

Rita Atim-Kitsamba (2011 Commonwealth Professional Fellow from Uganda, Public Health – Maternal and Child Health Care, Royal Berkshire

Hospital) is the Sister in charge of the Maternity Unit of Kisiizi Hospital in Uganda.

During her Professional Fellowship, Rita consolidated her skills in areas such as breech presentations, scanning pregnant mothers, and resuscitating neonates. Rita continues to collaborate with Dr Helen Allot, Consultant Obstetrician at her host hospital, on developing facilities and patient care at Kisiizi Hospital, which has seen an increase in the range of treatments and facilities available for patients as a result.

To cope with growing demand, Helen helped secure sponsorship for further training for Rita and her colleagues. Judith Turkey, Midwifery Manager at the Royal Berkshire Hospital, has helped Rita source donor funding to build a new midwifery ward.

Rita's host hospital has helped her and her colleagues both during the Professional Fellowship and since her return. 'Helen gave support and practical advice as an obstetric consultant to us midwives, nurses, doctors, clinical officers and the local community at large,' said Rita.

### ACADEMIC FELLOW RECEIVES AFRICAN STUDIES PRIZE



**Dr Olufunke Adebeye,**  
2009 Commonwealth  
Academic Fellow and  
winner of the Gerti  
Hesseling Prize

for the author of the best contribution to a European African Studies journal.

Olufunke's winning article is titled 'A Church in a Cinema Hall? Pentecostal Appropriation of Public Space in Nigeria', and was published in the *Journal of Religion in Africa* (42.2: 145-171, 2012). She is currently working on a book based on her Fellowship research. In 2011, Olufunke became the

Dr Olufunke Adebeye (2009 Commonwealth Academic Fellow from Nigeria, African History, University of Cambridge) was awarded the Gerti Hesseling Prize during the 5th European Conference on African Studies in Lisbon, Portugal, in June 2013. The prize, awarded by the Africa Europe Group for Interdisciplinary Studies (AEGIS), a consortium of all African Studies centres in European universities and research institutes, is

first female Professor of History at the University of Lagos, Nigeria; in 2013, she was appointed Head of the Department of History and Strategic Studies.

### SUPPORT FOR SCHOLAR'S RESEARCH INTO MALAYSIA'S DUGONGS

Dr Louisa Ponnampalam (2004 Commonwealth Scholar from Malaysia, PhD Habitat Use and Conservation of Small Dolphins, University Marine Biological Station, Millport) has been awarded a 2014 Pew Fellowship in Marine Conservation to conduct new research on Malaysia's population of dugongs. Louisa is a Research Fellow at the Institute of Ocean and Earth Sciences at the University of Malaya, Malaysia, and co-founder of grassroots NGO the MareCet Research Organization.

The Pew Fellowship will provide USD 150,000 for a three-year project to address conservation challenges facing the oceans. As a developing nation, Malaysia's coast is undergoing rapid, large-scale developments, sometimes putting pressure on its marine environment. Focusing on the islands located off the east coast of Johor in Peninsular Malaysia, Louisa's research will identify areas that are critical for one of the country's last remaining population of dugongs to provide recommendations for their habitat protection.



**Dr Louisa Ponnampalam, 2004 Commonwealth**  
Scholar from Malaysia and 2014 Pew Fellow

## Awards and prizes

Dr Abdullah Al Faruque (2001 Commonwealth Scholar from Bangladesh, PhD Energy Law, University of Dundee) has won the Bangladesh University Grants Commission Award for his article,

Have you changed job or email or postal address? Let us know at [alumnitrace@cscuk.org.uk](mailto:alumnitrace@cscuk.org.uk). All employment information received by the CSC will be added to our database and included in our annual refresh of the online Directory of Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows.



'Judicial Activism and Protection of Environment in Bangladesh', published in *The South Asian Journal* (2010).

Professor Paul Armah (1986 Commonwealth Scholar from Ghana, PhD Agricultural Economics and Food Marketing, Aberystwyth University) has been awarded a research grant by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture. Paul, who is a Professor of Agricultural Economics at Arkansas State University, USA, will work alongside faculty members at the College of Agriculture and Technology at the university to advance bioenergy research into a crop that researchers believe could provide strong opportunities for the growth and development of Arkansas's Delta region, the state, and wider regions.



**Dr Prafulla Mohapatra**, 1973 Commonwealth Scholar and National Fellow of the Indian Council of Philosophical Research

Dr Prafulla Mohapatra (1973 Commonwealth Scholar from India, PhD Philosophy, University of Keele) has been awarded the 2013-2014 National Fellowship of the Indian Council of Philosophical Research. Prafulla was also selected for premier recognition, which has been awarded to only two other distinguished philosophers in India.

Professor Bhaskara Rao Malla (2000 Commonwealth Fellow from India, Neurosurgery and Epilepsy Surgery, Guy's, King's and St Thomas' Schools of Medicine) has been awarded a Fellowship by the Royal College of Surgeons of England.

## Publications

Dr Dharshani Bandupriya (2007 Commonwealth Scholar from Sri Lanka, PhD Plant Biotechnology – Gene Cloning, University of Reading) has recently published an article titled 'Overexpression of coconut AINTEGUMENTA-like gene, CnANT, promotes in vitro regeneration in transgenic *Arabidopsis*' in the *Journal of Plant Cell Tissue and Organ Culture* (116.1: 67-69, 2014).

Dr Claire Durant (1992 Commonwealth Scholar from Barbados, PhD Plant Pathology, Imperial College London) has recently published *Biology for*



**Dr Claire Durant**, 1992 Commonwealth Scholar from Barbados

*CAPE Examinations* (Macmillan, 2013), a textbook which serves as a comprehensive guide following the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination biology syllabus.

Dr Subramaniam Kugathas (2007 Commonwealth Scholar from Sri Lanka, PhD Ecotoxicology and Fish Reproduction, Brunel University) has published an article titled 'Prediction of environmental concentrations of glucocorticoids: The River Thames, UK, as an example' in the journal *Environment International* (40: 15-23, 2012).

## Recent appointments

Dr Kolawole Adebayo (2009 Commonwealth Scholar from Nigeria, PhD Agricultural Extension and Rural Development, University of Reading) has been appointed Director of the Directorate of Grants Management at the Federal University of Agriculture Abeokuta, Nigeria.

Dr Bavita Asthir (1999 Commonwealth Fellow from India, Control Mechanisms of Grain Filling in Barley, Scottish Agricultural College) has been appointed



**Dr Bavita Asthir**, 1999 Commonwealth Fellow from India

Head of the Department of Biochemistry at Punjab Agricultural University, India.

Professor Callistus Baliddawa (1990 Commonwealth Scholar from Uganda, PhD Applied Entomology, Imperial College London) has been appointed Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Academic Affairs at Gulu University, Uganda.

Dr Nigel Clarke (1993 Commonwealth Scholar from Jamaica, PhD Statistics (Applied), University of Oxford) has been appointed to the Senate of the Parliament of Jamaica, as an Opposition Senator.

**Chuma Kabaghe**, 1989 Commonwealth Scholar and Manager for Corporate Social Responsibility at Lubambe Copper Mine



Chuma Kabaghe (1989 Commonwealth Scholar from Zambia, MA Development Economics, University of Sussex) has been appointed Manager for Corporate Social Responsibility at Lubambe Copper Mine Limited, Zambia.



**Dr Marcelle Olivier**, 2002 Commonwealth Scholar from South Africa

Dr Marcelle Olivier (2002 Commonwealth Scholar from South Africa, MPhil World Archaeology, University of Oxford) has been appointed Academic Programme Manager for South Africa's New Universities Project.

Professor A M A M Zonaed Siddiki (2002 Commonwealth Scholar from Bangladesh, PhD Molecular Parasitology, University of Liverpool) has been appointed Director of Research and Extension at Chittagong Veterinary and Animal Sciences University, Bangladesh.

Professor Rosemarie Wright-Pascoe (1995 Commonwealth Fellow from Jamaica, Endocrinology and Metabolism, University of Edinburgh) has been appointed Professor of Medicine and Endocrinology at the University of the West Indies.

# HEART CHANGES IN YOUNG ADULTS WHO WERE BORN EARLY

*Adam Lewandowski, 2009 Commonwealth Scholar from Canada and winner of the 2013 Taylor & Francis Commonwealth Scholar Best Journal Article Prize, explains the research behind his prize-winning article.*

**M**y article, 'Preterm Heart in Adult Life: Cardiovascular Magnetic Resonance Reveals Distinct Differences in Left Ventricular Mass, Geometry, and Function' (*Circulation*, 127: 197-206, 2013) was part of a body of work carried out for my DPhil thesis at the University of Oxford. I explored for the first time in humans the impact of being born early on the structure and function of the left ventricle – the main pumping chamber of the heart – in later life. Advancements in clinical care have led to a growing cohort of preterm-born individuals now entering adulthood, such that up to 10% of young adults have been born preterm (pregnancy less than 37 weeks in duration, whereas normal pregnancy is 40 weeks). Any adverse health impact is relevant to a large population of adults.

Before birth, preterm-born individuals have often been exposed to suboptimal pregnancy conditions and, after delivery, key developmental stages that would normally take place inside the mother have to take place under the stresses of the external environment. Long-term heart changes in preterm-born individuals had never been explored in humans, but it was believed that it would be particularly affected given the results from animal experimental studies, which have demonstrated adverse heart remodelling following preterm birth.

We studied 102 young adults born preterm; this cohort had the advantage of prospective follow-up from birth, with detailed data collection from the first days of life through to early adulthood. As comparison groups, we recruited 102 young adults born term to uncomplicated pregnancies and a group of 30 term-born individuals a decade older to undergo identical investigations to characterise normal cardiovascular changes with ageing. Cardiovascular magnetic resonance imaging



**Dr Adam Lewandowski**, 2009 Commonwealth Scholar and winner of the 2013 Taylor & Francis Commonwealth Scholar Best Journal Article Prize

was used for accurate, non-invasive assessment of cardiac structure and function in humans. Novel techniques were used to form a computational atlas of the left ventricle, which has the advantage of capturing three-dimensional geometric variation within populations to explore risk factor influences.

Our study demonstrated for the first time that young adults born preterm have a unique left ventricular structure. They have an increase in left ventricular mass, which is an independent predictor for cardiovascular morbidity and mortality. The increase in left ventricular mass is inversely related to gestational age (the earlier you were born, the greater the mass) and independent of variation in blood pressure. Preterm-born young adults also have shorter left ventricles, smaller internal

cavity diameters, and smaller chamber volumes.

This research has strengthened our understanding of the long-term cardiovascular risk of being born preterm. An additional paper, 'Right ventricular systolic dysfunction in young adults born preterm' (*Circulation*, 128: 713-20, 2013) explored the changes in the right ventricle which pumps blood to the lungs. The relative impact of preterm birth and change compared to term-born controls is greater for the right than the left ventricle. This is of particular clinical relevance given that right heart function is of independent and additive prognostic value in chronic heart failure and a powerful predictor of mortality in left heart failure.

The most obvious clinical implication from these studies is that preterm-born individuals, regardless of gestational age, require close monitoring of cardiovascular risk factors such as blood pressure. It is known that lifestyle and pharmacological interventions can be beneficial in older people with cardiovascular diseases that have reduced heart function. Drug therapies are not an ideal intervention in young people for the prevention of future problems. However, it is known that weight loss in young obese individuals improves heart size and function. Therefore, it is of interest to know whether lifestyle in young adulthood may be of relevance to optimise the long-term heart health of preterm-born individuals.

Further research is necessary to achieve the goal to prevent the progression of cardiovascular disease in preterm-born individuals. Ultimately, this knowledge can be used in the design of interventions to alter cardiovascular physiology and prevent the development of heart disease in preterm-born individuals.



# CUTTING-EDGE RESEARCH: COMMONWEALTH SCHOLARS LEAD THE WAY

*Entries for the 2013 Taylor & Francis Commonwealth Scholar Best Journal Article Prize were from a wide range of disciplines, and with a large geographical coverage. Here, we look at some of the articles that showcase the groundbreaking research undertaken by Commonwealth Scholars.*

**D**r Philip Antwi-Agyei (2009 Commonwealth Scholar from Ghana, PhD Sustainable Agriculture, University of Leeds) published an article titled 'Mapping the vulnerability of crop production to drought in Ghana using rainfall, yield and socioeconomic data' in the *Journal of Applied Geography* (32.2: 324-334, 2012). Philip's article applies and evaluates new multi-scale, multi-indicator methods for assessing the vulnerability of crop production to drought at a national and regional scale, by identifying differences across and within ten regions of Ghana.



**Dr Philip Antwi-Agyei**, 2009  
Commonwealth  
Scholar from Ghana

The methodological approach in this study has development significance and has been adopted by researchers at the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) Ghana Country Office. As a result, they have carried out a local-level vulnerability assessment for the selection of appropriate districts and communities for the government of Ghana to target as part of its proposal to access adaptation funding under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). By developing and applying such multi-scale integrated quantitative approaches for climate change vulnerability assessment, Philip's article contributes to geographical and scientific debates on the development of integrated vulnerability assessments that can be applied in geographical areas for which detailed data may be lacking.

**D**r Adrian T Murdock (2009 Commonwealth Scholar from Australia, DPhil Material Science, University of Oxford) published an article in *ACS Nano* titled 'Controlling the

Orientation, Edge Geometry, and Thickness of Chemical Vapor Deposition Graphene' (7.2: 1351-1359, 2013). His research is on the development of new and novel methods for producing a one-atom-thick material that is predicted to bring about the next great technological revolution: graphene. Graphene is the thinnest and strongest material ever produced. It is also flexible, highly transparent, and a better conductor than copper. Adrian worked with a team of scientists at the University of Oxford to discover how graphene flakes could be lined up by using the atomic structure of the copper surface as a 'guide' to control the orientation of the graphene flakes growing on top of them. This discovery demonstrated a unique method to improve the quality of chemical vapour deposition (CVD) graphene, a contribution which will lead to improved production of large-area graphene sheets for use in future applications.



**Dr Adrian T Murdock**, 2009  
Commonwealth  
Scholar from Australia

Since its publication, Adrian's article has been cited four times in eight months. His team's discovery has also been featured in news articles for the University of Oxford website and both local and international media, including a 'Thought Leader' interview for the A to Z of Materials website, a news article in *Microscopy and Analysis*, and pieces on a number of other science websites.

**D**r Sarah-Jane Dawson (2007 Commonwealth Scholar from Australia, PhD Molecular Biomarkers in Breast Cancer, University of Cambridge) recently published a paper titled



**Dr Sarah-Jane Dawson**, 2007  
Commonwealth  
Scholar from Australia

'Analysis of Circulating Tumor DNA to Monitor Metastatic Breast Cancer' in *The New England Journal of Medicine* (368.13: 1199-1209, 2013). Many breast cancers shed small amounts of DNA (called circulating tumour DNA or ctDNA) into the patient's bloodstream. The measurement of ctDNA in the blood of women with breast cancer has the potential to be used as a marker of disease progression or response to therapy. Sarah-Jane's research involved the use of ctDNA to monitor tumour burden in women with advanced breast cancer. The findings revealed that ctDNA is a more sensitive and dynamic indicator of tumour burden, compared to other cancer markers that can be assessed in blood.

The use of ctDNA provides the first opportunity for molecular disease monitoring in breast cancer, a strategy that has not previously been possible. The technique has enormous potential to transform the management of breast cancer in women.

Dr David Green, Taylor & Francis' Global Journals Publishing Director, offered his congratulations to the 2013 prize winner and the other entrants. 'Taylor & Francis has long been involved in publishing Commonwealth-related content, and is delighted to continue its support of this prize, which recognises excellent published research by early career scholars. We congratulate Adam Lewandowski on his important cardiovascular research findings, which have valuable societal and medical implications. We also congratulate all prize entrants on their publications as a bedrock for communicating their research to the world.'

# ALUMNI PROFILE

*Three alumni describe how they are increasing access to healthcare, social equity and democracy.*



**Kenneth Mwehonge**, 2012 Commonwealth Professional Fellow and health activist

**K**enneth Mwehonge (2012 Commonwealth Professional Fellow from Uganda, Public Health Governance, NHS Bristol) has worked to influence government policy to widen public access to medicines. Kenneth is a Programme Officer at HEPS-Uganda (the Coalition for Health Promotion and Social Development). He also coordinates the Uganda Coalition for Access to Essential Medicines (UCAEM), a coalition of over 30 local and national non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that actively advocate for access to essential medicines in Uganda through influencing policies to ensure that they are consumer-friendly.

Kenneth worked on a campaign for intellectual property rights legislation to protect public health interests in Uganda, aiming to influence the Industrial Property Bill being debated by the Ugandan Parliament in 2013. The campaign aimed to ensure that the bill incorporated Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) flexibilities, which would allow Uganda, as a low-income country, to produce and import generic medicines – on which 90% of Ugandans are dependent.

The Coalition successfully influenced the negative provisions in the Bill, against resistance from multinational pharmaceutical companies. 'We are happy that Uganda has a law that will increase access to essential medicines for all Ugandans, especially the poor and vulnerable who cannot afford brand medicines,' explained Kenneth. 'The exposure the Professional Fellowship gave me to healthcare policy highly contributed to the success of the campaign, because it strengthened my advocacy and campaigning abilities.'



**Victoria Emah-Emah**, 2012 Commonwealth Professional Fellow from Nigeria

**V**ictoria Emah-Emah (2012 Commonwealth Professional Fellow from Nigeria, Public Health Governance, Terrence Higgins Trust) is Executive Director of the Neighbourhood Care-Well Foundation in Nigeria. Her work encompasses social inclusion and healthcare policy advocacy, and she has received an award from Civil Society for HIV/AIDS in Nigeria for her campaigning work on HIV/AIDS. Currently, she is engaged in advocating for a policy to enable teenage pregnant girls to return to school, including a rehabilitation period for young mothers, and to safeguard funding their education to secondary school level.

Through her Professional Fellowship, Victoria joined Vital Voices' VVLead Fellowship Program. This link improved Victoria's capacity to deal with domestic violence issues in her home country, and has led to her working with other women in the network internationally, sharing skills and participating in advocacy work in India and Uganda. A key part of this work includes peer-to-peer mentoring, including working with a colleague from India on addressing violence against women globally, and inspiring women to take leadership roles. She is also campaigning for poverty reduction for women, and against child marriage.

Victoria's Professional Fellowship also enabled her to review her organisation's processes and to improve institutional capacity, with the communities they are serving benefiting as a result. 'The Professional Fellowship has been the best experience I have ever had in my years of work as a civil society practitioner,' said Victoria.



**Aishath Rizna** (centre), 2011 Commonwealth Scholar from the Maldives, with colleagues at the UNDP Maldives Country Office

**A**ishath Rizna (2011 Commonwealth Scholar from the Maldives, LLM Human Rights, Conflict and Justice, SOAS, University of London) is working to empower women politically in the Maldives, both in leadership roles and in participation in public life.

Rizna became Assistant Resident Representative – Democratic Governance at the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) Maldives Country Office in 2013. She leads management of the Country Office's governance portfolio, including implementation of the Integrated Governance Programme, which works to engage women and young people and enhance their activity in public life.

Since joining UNDP, Rizna has contributed to building institutional capacity and promoting access to justice and the rule of law. UNDP has also been partnering with civil society organisations since 2011 to provide training for the empowerment of women in politics. 'There are limitations in accessing resources and opportunities for women to participate fully in public life,' explained Rizna. 'There are also cultural barriers that restrict the choices available for women.'

Ahead of local and parliamentary elections in March 2014, Rizna conducted training sessions to increase women's involvement in politics. A Women Leaders' Forum was held in February 2014 for women candidates and activists, with three of those attending going on to contest parliamentary seats in the election. The number of women councillors elected rose from one to seven.





**Dinesh Kodituwakku**, 2011 Commonwealth Scholar from Sri Lanka supported by the CSFP Endowment Fund

## SCHOLARSHIP PROVIDES ACCESS TO INTERNATIONAL NETWORKS AND EXPERTISE

Dinesh Kodituwakku, a 2011 Commonwealth Scholar from Sri Lanka supported by the CSFP Endowment Fund, has recently completed a Master's in Agriculture at the School of Agriculture and Food Technology at the University of the South Pacific (USP) in Samoa. The two-year programme included a Postgraduate Diploma in Agricultural Economics, which was awarded to Dinesh in 2012.

Dinesh's research topic was 'An Economic Study of Potential Production-promoting Sugarcane and Sugar Policies in Sri Lanka: Some Recommendations in the Light of Indian and Thai Policy Lessons'. As this was a comparative study, he found it helpful to be based at a university with an internationally-diverse staff and student body. USP has lecturers from New Zealand, India, Fiji, Samoa, Nigeria, and the Philippines. 'Sharing knowledge and experiences as well as personal contacts will enable me to expand my professional network in the future,' said Dinesh.

Dinesh investigated sugar cane and sugar policies in different countries. 'This will potentially assist in achieving the Government of Sri Lanka's objective of increasing its sugar production up to 40% of domestic demand by the year 2020,' he explained. 'The knowledge of production-oriented policies for both sugar cane and sugar production will allow me to recommend better policies to achieve this target.'

Studying at USP gave Dinesh the opportunity to acquire a wide knowledge of agricultural policies implemented in different Pacific Island countries. Some of these policies may be applicable to Sri Lanka, and Dinesh aims to use these in the future in his work as Research Officer (Economics) at the Sugarcane Research Institute in Sri Lanka. 'With the additional capability, I hope to be able to assist in formulating production-oriented sugar policies for Sri Lanka. I'm also anticipating that with this degree, I can step up my career to a higher level in the future.'

Dinesh believes that the Commonwealth Scholarships supported by the CSFP endowment fund are important, as they allow students to explore similar development issues facing economies in Asia and Africa. 'This will enable students to compare, share, and acquire good policies, practices, and programmes implemented by countries across different regions.'

## STRENGTHENING HORTICULTURAL RESEARCH IN BOTSWANA

Christinah Matsuane, a 2013 Commonwealth Scholar from Botswana supported by the CSFP Endowment Fund, is studying for an MSc in Horticulture at the University of Swaziland. With a comparatively low level of horticultural production and crop research in Botswana, Christinah was interested in studying abroad to gain access to technologies and practices used in agriculture.

Christinah enjoys studying with people from different backgrounds and cultures. She has also found the practical part of her courses



**Christinah Matsuane**, 2013 Commonwealth Scholar from Botswana supported by the CSFP Endowment Fund

extremely useful, with valuable on-site experience in horticultural fruit farms, thanks to the climate difference in Swaziland.

Before her Master's studies, Christinah was an Assistant Tutor at the Botswana College of Agriculture, supervising and providing technical advice and assistance to students undertaking practical work and projects, and assisting academic staff with their research projects. She aims to continue her postgraduate studies, and undertake a PhD in Horticulture. 'This will equip me with better knowledge of horticultural practices, research, teaching, and presentation skills which I will use to fulfil my job.'

Christinah's Commonwealth Scholarship is not only helping to develop her own professional skill base, but will also help build institutional capacity at her college in Botswana. 'I had no funds to further my studies and the Commonwealth Scholarship will open doors for me in the future. Hopefully, I will become a lecturer. This will also help me to meet the demands of our college, as we are about to become a university but we have few lecturers.'

## 2013-2014 CSFP ENDOWMENT FUND AWARDS

Dr K Murugosh Bab from India has been selected for a Commonwealth Academic Fellowship supported by the CSFP Endowment Fund. His Fellowship in Engineering will be held at the University of Maroua, Cameroon.

# OUR IMPACT

*Matt Mawer and Kathryn Scurfield report on the latest activities of the CSC Evaluation and Monitoring Programme.*

**Value for money represents a series of hard questions: how do we monetise, for instance, influence on social change or individual empowerment?**

## **EVALUATING EVALUATION: SCOPING STUDY ON RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

A question with which we regularly wrestle in the Evaluation team is how best to understand the effectiveness and impact of Commonwealth Scholarships. As many of you may have experienced, we employ a variety of methods – most notably our annual alumni survey and case studies of individual Scholars.

We are always very keen to understand what other evaluation work is being conducted on international scholarships. There are many providers around the world and the body of intriguing evaluation data grows every year. In January 2014, we set out to analyse some of this evaluation data and to make sense of the trends in methodology used to evaluate international scholarship schemes.

A systematic literature review would have been very difficult. Evaluation research is published in a variety of spaces: on government agency websites, in books, occasionally in academic journal articles, and sometimes only for internal audiences. Instead, we have conducted a scoping study, searching and gaining access to as many evaluation reports as possible across as wide a base of scholarship schemes as possible. In total, we have analysed approximately 60 reports, articles, or book chapters directly concerned with evaluating scholarships, corresponded directly with 11 evaluators at scholarship providers, and contextualised our findings within literature on ongoing important discussions on methodology within the international development community.

Our findings confirm some of what we knew already, though there were some interesting surprises. The following is a brief summary of our findings on the structure of evaluations:

1. The majority of evaluation work is ex-post, i.e. it traces alumni sometime after their scholarships. We found some compelling examples of longitudinal research, but these were very rare.
2. Methodology – separate from data collection methods – is not discussed very much within the sector. Donald Kirkpatrick's evaluation model is the favoured framework, but it is far from universally used.
3. Almost all evaluation is concerned with similar issues, such as completion rates, gains in knowledge and skills, return to home country, and employment trajectory post-award.
4. Surveys are the dominant tool for data collection, especially with Likert-style questions. Face-to-face interviews are also very common, often as part of visits to countries by evaluation teams.
5. Data analysis in the sector is not always clear. Qualitative analysis of interviews and focus groups is rarely documented in detail. Statistical data analysis is prevalent, but tends to focus on descriptive statistics. Inferential statistics appear to be less widely used.

We have also explored several thematic issues of interest to evaluators across the sector. Two particularly important topics are the counterfactual and value for money.

The counterfactual is essentially the evaluator's answer to the question 'What would have happened without the scholarships?', and the strategies for addressing this question are both varied and largely underdeveloped within the sector. We have read sophisticated research approaches using comparison groups, usually constituted of applicants who were not selected for scholarships. We have also heard legitimate concerns about the difficulty in establishing a valid and persuasive counterfactual for internationally-mobile scholars, who often forge

unique life trajectories and diverse forms of impact when they return home.

Value for money is, unsurprisingly, a major topic of concern for funders of scholarships. Almost all evaluations include some analysis of the efficiency of financial administration within scholarship programmes, but evaluation research has struggled to show the relationships between the benefits we accrue for the resources we spend. Value for money represents a series of hard questions: how do we monetise, for instance, influence on social change or individual empowerment? Some evaluators have proposed, and even adopted, strategies, but as evaluators we are doubtless still grappling with the problem.

We aim for our scoping study to provide valuable information for both the CSC and for other scholarship providers to consider the state of evaluation research on international scholarships. It helps us understand what we are doing well, where we can learn from others, and what common challenges are being encountered and solved.

The international dialogue around evaluation has been ongoing for many years. Through exercises like our scoping study, we correspond with evaluators around the world who share our aims: to understand the impact of our scholarships, to inform our scholarship policy, and, ultimately, to help our scholars create a better world.

## **ACADEMIC FELLOWSHIP FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS**

In November 2013, the CSC Evaluation team held two back-to-back focus group discussions with Academic Fellows who were on award at the time and a small group of supervisors. This group of Fellows was of particular interest because,





**Dr Chamari Palliyeguru**, 2006 Commonwealth Scholar and 2013 Commonwealth Academic Fellow, searching for her name in the Directory of Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows, with Dr John Kirkland, Executive Secretary of the CSC, at the Academic Fellows focus group discussion in November 2013

The opportunity to study in the UK is a 'world-class experience' that broadens horizons, changes thinking, and 'opens doors to the world'.

unlike other Fellows, they had already completed a PhD by means of a Commonwealth Scholarship. The Evaluation team viewed this as a valuable opportunity both to gain in-depth information about the Academic Fellowship scheme and to verify specific outcomes of the Fellows' first PhD award and the perceived added value of studying in the UK.

Specifically, both focus groups were intended to collect qualitative information regarding the impact of both the CSC's PhD and Academic Fellowship awards, to feed into the overarching objective of informing the Commission's strategy and advising how the schemes could be carried forward.

Many interesting themes arose in both focus groups, particularly supporting the notions that

there is tremendous added value to studying and undertaking professional development in the UK, and that PhDs produce valuable tangible outcomes for both individuals and wider society.

The Fellows' focus group highlighted a number of outcomes that arise from completing a PhD, such as additional journal articles and publications that stem from original PhD research, publishable books, and promotions to more senior positions upon return home. Fellows also mentioned that PhDs help to facilitate collaboration on research and projects between various groups, including universities in the UK and in Asian countries, academic peers, and students. In addition, undertaking a PhD develops practical skills such as training postgraduate students and working professionals.

The Fellows unanimously agreed that there was great added value to undertaking studies in the UK. Coming to the UK enables access to resources that would have not otherwise been available, such as better facilities, particularly for people in the science and health fields. They also said that having the opportunity to study overseas, and in the UK particularly, is a 'world-class experience' that broadens horizons, changes thinking, and 'opens doors to the world'. Being able to interact with people from different backgrounds and cultures was seen as an invaluable experience. Participants also outlined some unintended benefits, such as the positive impact that studying in the UK can have

- Developing links with UK organisations, including charities and government agencies

The supervisors' focus group findings focused mostly on the logistical aspects of the scheme, but also provided an interesting insight into supervisors' experiences. Supervisors noted that, although the three-month structure of the Academic Fellowship is very tight in terms of time, goals are achievable if objectives are clearly outlined from the outset, particularly if Fellows return to the same institution in which they undertook their PhD.

Supervisors said that Academic Fellowships offer Fellows the opportunity to fill gaps in their knowledge, learn new techniques and applications in their field, gain commercial experience, and establish new links. The Fellowship

is, in a way, similar to a sabbatical which allows Fellows to focus solely on their work, and can even lead to promotion on return home. Supervisors recommended at least a three-year gap between completing a PhD and undertaking a Fellowship, allowing the individual time to reflect on their area of work, making the experience more relevant and valuable.

Lastly, it was felt that Academic Fellowships offer benefits to UK institutions and supervisors both professionally and personally. Supervisors said that exposure to different cultures is beneficial not only for international students, but also for UK students and universities. They also asserted that the Academic Fellowships scheme helps to encourage strong institutional collaboration and partnerships, which is an invaluable asset to the UK.

## There is tremendous added value to studying and undertaking professional development in the UK.

on families – some Fellows said that their children were encouraged to study abroad as a result, further perpetuating the notion of building international links and networks.

The Fellows stated that their motivation for undertaking an Academic Fellowship stemmed from wanting to enhance and develop new skills, boost their CVs, and even discover new directions for research. They said that the benefits of undertaking the Fellowship include:

- Networking with institutions
- Collaborating on publications
- Filling gaps in research
- Building academic relationships to further improve research
- Networking with other Fellows

# NETWORKS AND EVENTS



Commonwealth Scholars at the **Team Commonwealth event** reaching a consensus

## MASTER'S SCHOLARS JOIN TEAM COMMONWEALTH

In March 2014, the CSC held a residential event for Commonwealth Scholars studying for Master's degrees, titled 'Team Commonwealth: moving forward with the modern Commonwealth'. Falling at the end of Commonwealth Week, the event was inspired by this year's theme, 'Team Commonwealth', which aims to promote teamwork and collaboration both within and between Commonwealth countries.

Through plenary sessions and discussions, participants explored the historic and contemporary

status of the Commonwealth and the role of Commonwealth Scholars, and considered how this 'team' of countries could address the challenges of the future. 41 Scholars from 19 countries and a wide range of subject areas took part in the event.

The weekend's activities culminated in a consensus decision-making exercise to recommend three priority areas for Commonwealth Heads of Government to focus on in the next five years, and the things that Commonwealth Scholars should do on their return home to contribute to achieving those aims.



Commonwealth Scholars at the **Development Module Road Map workshop** work on their personal development plans

## DEVELOPMENT MODULE: IMPACT AND THE PHD SCHOLARSHIP

The Cumberland Lodge weekend in March 2014 also saw the delivery of a Development Module Road Map workshop. The event, for those in their first year of studies, formed the first half of the Development Module programme for Commonwealth Scholars studying PhDs. The module aims to deliver training to ensure that Scholars are able to achieve development impact in their communities, as well as providing the opportunity to collaborate and share resources and practice with fellow researchers.

Participants explored a range of international development issues and changing perspectives on development, as well as creating a personal development plan, which expands upon the ideas from their original scholarship applications to outline a plan of action for the duration of their time in the UK.

Scholars will return in the final year of their awards to complete the Tool Kit workshop. This final part of the programme will enable Scholars to work effectively with development institutions, nationally and internationally, on their return home.

Photos of both events are available on the CSC's Flickr page at [flickr.com/cscuk](https://www.flickr.com/photos/cscuk/)

## Professional Networks

### SHARE YOUR NEWS WITH THE CSC COMMUNITY!

A key aim of the CSC Professional Networks is to enable you to share your current work directly with the rest of the CSC community. We aim to follow up on your news items for features for future issues of Commonwealth Scholarships News or on the CSC website.

Members of our Professional Networks have also used the discussions to make new links with other Scholars and Fellows in different regions and countries, to share ideas, experiences, and knowledge. We look forward to your continued contributions to the groups, and welcome your views on how they can help you connect with other members of the CSC community.



You can find out more about the Professional Networks at [bit.ly/cscuk-professional-networks](http://bit.ly/cscuk-professional-networks). Let us know if you have made a useful contact by emailing [alumni@cscuk.org.uk](mailto:alumni@cscuk.org.uk) with your experiences.

Alumni decided in favour of a formal structure that allows for the exchange of expertise, networking, and mentoring of new Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows, and which could also act as a platform to foster service to the community.



Scholars browse the display of photos at the **Indian alumni event**

The reception that followed brought together guests including representatives from the Ugandan Ministry of Education and Sports and the British High Commissioner to Uganda, HE Alison Blackburne. The High Commissioner commended the alumni on their meeting and deliberations, and promised to draw on discussions from the meeting to forge a way to support the growth of the alumni network.

Technology, and the British Council. Guests were able to share views on the nomination process for Commonwealth Scholarships and Fellowships, discuss the number and provision of different types of scholarships and fellowships in the region, and explore how the various stakeholders could work together in the future.

Professor Wastling praised the input of the CSC alumni. 'Their professionalism and enthusiasm are clearly some of the greatest and longest-lasting assets of our programme – they are truly great ambassadors for the impact of our scholarships and fellowships.'

#### **BANGLADESH ALUMNI PLAN ASSOCIATION**

More than 60 alumni attended an event held in Dhaka, Bangladesh, in February 2014. The meeting was highly interactive, and started with a networking skills development session. This was followed by a presentation providing an overview of CSC alumni associations and their activities in neighbouring countries. Alumni spent time considering the formation and purpose of a CSC alumni association in Bangladesh. A group of 15 volunteered to work on developing a proposal for the association.

#### **ZAMBIAN ALUMNI PROPOSE ACTIVITIES TO SUPPORT SCHOLARS AND FELLOWS**

Zambian alumni met in Lusaka in March 2014, and were keen to take forward plans for future networking and the formation of a local alumni association – as 'a way to give something back'. The association would also provide alumni with a platform to network, share knowledge, mentor, and support other Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows. There was also a special mention of support for Distance Learning Scholars, who do not usually visit the UK during their scholarship.

The meeting closed with a keynote address from 2009 Commonwealth Distance Learning Scholar Lawrence Mwenge (MSc Public Health, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine), who highlighted his journey from being awarded his Commonwealth Scholarship to the professional benefits he has amassed since receiving his Master's qualification. Lawrence is also one of three volunteers taking forward the planning for a local alumni association.

## **Alumni events**

### **NETWORKING INDIAN ALUMNI**

An event in New Delhi, India, in November 2013 brought together more than 90 Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows from across all disciplines, ranging from 22 to 76 years of age. The British Council-hosted event combined informal networking with professional development sessions. The main focus was discussion about establishing a local association for Indian alumni. Other highlights of the day included a display of photos provided by alumni from their time in the UK, and presentations on the life-changing impact of their awards. An evening reception enabled guests to review a busy and productive day.

### **UGANDAN ALUMNI KEEN TO PLAY AN ACTIVE PART IN THEIR COMMUNITY**

Alumni met in Kampala, Uganda, in December 2013 to discuss how they could follow other alumni in the region by setting up a local alumni association. The event began with a focus group discussion to explore the type of networking group that the alumni could form.

### **TANZANIAN ALUMNI SEEK TO JOIN POLICY DIALOGUES**

Alumni from across Tanzania gathered for a meeting and reception, hosted by the British Council, in Dar es Salaam in December 2013. All attendees agreed that an alumni association would be of value to them, especially one through which they could network, mentor each other professionally, and contribute to national development by engaging in policy dialogues.

The keynote speaker at the meeting was the British High Commissioner to Tanzania, HE Dianna Melrose. In her speech, the High Commissioner applauded the alumni for taking this first step to meet, and gave her support by offering her residence for their future meetings and association launch party. She also took the opportunity to encourage the alumni to network with the wider UK alumni association in Tanzania.

### **KENYAN ALUMNI CONTRIBUTE TO CSC POLICY DISCUSSIONS**

Professor Jonathan Wastling, Commonwealth Scholarship Commissioner and Chair of the CSC Award Policy Committee, met with alumni in Kenya in January 2014. The event in Nairobi brought together alumni with representatives from the Kenyan Ministry of Higher Education, Science and



## Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK

The Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the United Kingdom (CSC) is responsible for managing Britain's contribution to the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP).

The CSC supports over 900 scholarships and fellowships for postgraduate study and professional development each year. Awards are funded by the Department for International Development (for developing Commonwealth countries) and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and the Scottish Government (for developed Commonwealth countries), in conjunction with UK universities. The CSC also nominates UK citizens for scholarships to study in other Commonwealth countries under the CSFP.

The CSC makes available seven types of award:

- Scholarships for PhD research
- Scholarships for Master's study
- Shared Scholarships with UK universities in support of Master's programmes
- Academic Fellowships for staff serving in developing country universities
- Split-site Scholarships for PhD students to spend up to one year in the UK
- Professional Fellowships for mid-career professionals in developing countries
- Distance Learning Scholarships for developing country students to study UK Master's degree courses while living in their own countries

The CSC was established by Act of Parliament in 1959, and is a non-departmental public body in its own right. Members are appointed in line with the Code of Practice of the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments. The CSC's Secretariat is provided by the Association of Commonwealth Universities; overseas services are provided by the British Council.

The Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP) is an international programme under which member governments offer scholarships and fellowships to citizens of other Commonwealth countries. It was established at the first Commonwealth education conference in 1959 and is reviewed by ministers at their triennial meetings.

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