



COMMONWEALTH  
SCHOLARSHIPS

# NEWS

Promoting learning, development and co-operation

Issue 20  
March 2015

## Commonwealth Scholars speak up!



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OUR ALUMNI · T&F COMMONWEALTH SCHOLAR BEST JOURNAL ARTICLE PRIZE · NETWORKS AND EVENTS

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After a busy conference workshop, I was catching up on personal news with a colleague from an African university. I mentioned that I was interested in continuing to work with the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission, by applying to be Chair, but I was apprehensive about the responsibility and workload. 'But, Richard,' he replied, 'it is a national appointment. You must'.

He meant it is a civic duty to contribute when and how you can – an inescapable imperative.

Professor Tim Unwin, Chair of the CSC for six years until December 2014, is motivated by that strong sense of civic and moral obligation to contribute to change, to development, to opportunities for those disadvantaged by circumstance. Prior to being Chair, he was a Commissioner – in total stewarding the CSC's mission for 11 years. I take this opportunity to again say thank you to Tim, who has led and inspired the CSC with assurance, determination and humanity; he has welcomed and encouraged thousands of Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows to achieve their best, and to give their best to their country.

Readers of *Commonwealth Scholarships News* will have also identified over the years a significant contribution that Tim encouraged: the CSC thoroughly and openly evaluates the impact of its funding of scholarships and fellowships. The CSC has researched and published 12 reports investigating the contribution that Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows have made to national development. It challenges its efficacy by comparing Scholars' impact to the achievements of people who sought scholarships but were unsuccessful. The results affirm Tim's confidence that funding scholarships and fellowships for able people from the Commonwealth, and especially from developing nations, really does make a difference to national outcomes.

The CSC does much more in addition: it is a major funder of research, it helps to create collaborative international networks, it supports social mobility, and it enables those committed to national development to keep developing themselves.

I have learnt in my first weeks as Chair of the CSC that support for that mission cannot be assumed; it needs to be constantly recreated. The most fundamental argument for the UK government to keep funding that mission is that it works – that, as a consequence, lives and nations change for the better. All of the evidence to sustain that argument, and hence the funding for future Scholars and Fellows, comes from Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows who have returned home – from you, a reader of *Commonwealth Scholarships News*. Stay in touch, and share with us your news and successes; that too is a civic duty.

## Richard Middleton

Chair of the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK



**Richard Middleton**, Chair of the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK

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# NEWS ROUND-UP

## NEW CHAIR OF THE CSC

Richard Middleton has been appointed Chair of the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the United Kingdom (CSC).

Richard, who was recently appointed a Deputy Vice-Chancellor at Middlesex University, took up the post on 1 January 2015. He succeeds Professor Tim Unwin in the role.

International Development Secretary Justine Greening, welcoming the appointment, said 'Richard Middleton is an experienced Commissioner who has delivered strategic improvements in education and student services at a number of UK universities. He has an impressive understanding of the role of the Commission in delivering the UK's international development aims and a keen interest in the work of its students and academics. These are qualities that will serve him well in his leadership of the organisation'.

Richard, commenting on his appointment, said 'I am delighted to have been selected by the Secretary of State for International Development to be Chair of the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission. I have served as a Commissioner for the past five years and can truly say, as all Commissioners do, that helping these exceptional scholars and professionals to realise their ambitions for development in their home countries is an inspiration'.

## NEW COMMISSIONERS



**Professor Anne Anderson**, *Commonwealth Scholarship Commissioner*

In addition to appointing a new Chair, the Secretary of State for International Development has appointed four new members of the Commission, who started their terms on 1 January 2015.

Professor Anne Anderson OBE is Vice-Principal and Head of the College of Social Sciences at the University of Glasgow. She was previously Vice-Principal of the University of Dundee. Anne is Gender Champion for the University of Glasgow, a Trustee of the Crichton Foundation, and Chair of the Supervisory Board of the Scottish Graduate School for Social Sciences. She was appointed Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 2002 for services to social science.

Professor Brian Faragher is a Professor in Medical Statistics and Co-Director of the Tropical Clinical Trials Unit at the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine. His career has involved extensive travel to provide support in resource-poor areas, capacity building of research facilities, and teaching and mentoring in these areas. Brian is Vice-Chair of the Research Ethics Committee at the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, a member of other research ethics committees, and a member of the editorial board of the *PLOS ONE* journal.



**Professor David Francis**, *Commonwealth Scholarship Commissioner*

Professor David Francis is Head of the Department of Peace Studies at the University of Bradford. Previously, David served as Interim Vice-Chancellor of the UNESCO-affiliated African Peace University in Sierra Leone. He currently holds the UNESCO Chair in African Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Bradford and has provided a number of policy advisory and consultancy services for UN agencies, the EU, Western donor governments, African governments, regional organisations, and universities.

Dr Mary Stiasny OBE is Pro-Vice-Chancellor (International) and Chief Executive of the University of London International Programmes, and Pro-Director of Learning and International at the UCL Institute of Education. She was formerly Director of Education and Training at the British Council,

responsible for recruiting overseas students for the development of the UK Education Partnership. Mary was appointed Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 2013 for services to education.

## NEW APPOINTMENTS AT THE SECRETARIAT

James Phillips has joined the CSC Secretariat as Senior Alumni Engagement Officer. For the last five years, he has worked overseas for the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, firstly as the VIP Visits Officer in Pakistan and most recently as Vice-Consul in the Gambia. James has a BA in Politics and Geography from the University of Sussex.



**James Phillips**, *Senior Alumni Engagement Officer at the CSC Secretariat*

Shireen Quraishi has joined the CSC Secretariat as Programme Officer (Evaluation). She has previously worked at Hult International Business School and at the British Council. Shireen has a BSc in Psychology from the University of Essex and an MSc in Psychological Research Methods from Birkbeck, University of London.



**Shireen Quraishi**, *Programme Officer (Evaluation) at the CSC Secretariat*

## SEND US YOUR VIEWS

*Commonwealth Scholarships News* is the CSC's magazine for Commonwealth Scholars, Fellows, and alumni. Published twice a year, this magazine features news, events and individual stories, highlighting the work and achievements of current and former Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows.

We are keen to ensure that *Commonwealth Scholarships News* is interesting and engaging for readers, and will be redesigning the magazine ahead of its next issue later this year. We are keen to include feedback and suggestions from readers – let us know what you like most and least about the magazine at [comments@cscuk.org.uk](mailto:comments@cscuk.org.uk)

# OUR SCHOLARS AND FELLOWS

*Four Commonwealth Scholars report on their work and how it will benefit their home countries.*



**Tanvir Ahmad**, 2013 Commonwealth Scholar from Pakistan

## PROMOTING RENEWABLE ENERGY RESEARCH

Tanvir Ahmad is a 2013 Commonwealth Scholar from Pakistan, studying for a PhD at Durham University. His research looks at how artificial intelligence techniques can be used to reduce the cost of wind energy.

Tanvir was awarded a Clark Travel Scholarship by St Aidan's College, Durham University to carry out a development project in Pakistan last year. The project – co-funded by the Durham University International Office, where Tanvir is the Student Ambassador for Pakistan – aimed to increase awareness of renewable and wind energy research and to motivate and inform students, particularly female students, about research and scholarship opportunities.

'This project was an opportunity for me to bring something positive to my country. The universities and colleges chosen for it are located in the northwest of Pakistan, near the border of Afghanistan, which is badly affected by terrorism.'

Earlier in 2014, Tanvir had attended a CSC Development Module workshop for Commonwealth Scholars studying PhDs. Along with other attendees,

he created a development plan for implementation during his award. 'I mentioned in my development plan that I would like to be a bridge – a connection – between universities in the UK and Pakistan. The CSC Development Module gave me a direction and idea of how to do it.'

Tanvir gave presentations to students and researchers at universities in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and also in Islamabad. 'I encouraged the students to apply for Commonwealth Scholarships and Fellowships, sharing my experience as a Commonwealth Scholar. One important aim of the project was to encourage female students to pursue higher education, and I visited two girls' colleges and arranged seminars on the topic of scholarships and research opportunities for Master's and PhD studies. The audience was made up of faculty members and students. I also met some pre-engineering students and discussed issues related to engineering studies.

'I am very happy that all the students and Durham University helped me to make this project a successful one, which gave me a new dimension through which to serve society. Many of the students are still in contact with me through email and social media. I am planning to run the same kind of project next year, with the aim of engaging more students.'

## FOCUSING ON PREVENTATIVE MEASURES FOR DISEASES

Claudia Donkor is a 2014 Commonwealth Scholar from Ghana, studying for a Master's degree in Tropical Medicine and International Health at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM). Claudia is a medical doctor with a special interest in dermatology, and is also a Coordinator of the CSC South East Regional Network.

'I have always been interested in science, particularly medicine, because I felt it was the best way for me to make a difference in people's lives. With my years in medical practice, I gathered interest in both dermatology and public and international health and, after my qualification in dermatology, started looking at the prospect of further studies. LSHTM offers a unique course that combines both tropical medicine and international health, so I am really grateful to have received a Commonwealth Scholarship to pursue this.'

Claudia is interested in how preventative medicine can be used to manage medical conditions. 'I firmly believe that there must be a paradigm shift from the focus on curative medicine to preventive, because a lot of medical conditions and infections are preventable, including malaria, tuberculosis, and HIV/AIDS.

'There are a wide range of preventive measures for many diseases, such as the use of insecticide-impregnated mosquito nets, vaccines, contraceptive usage, lifestyle modifications, hygiene and sanitation measures – many of which are being stressed in the holistic management of several medical conditions. I am learning about new and innovative research findings, such as the RTS,S malaria vaccine.

Claudia is also learning more about the Ebola virus, at a time when the disease is plaguing countries in her home region. 'LSHTM's Director is a co-discoverer of the Ebola virus, so I could not be in a better place to learn more about it. I am currently enrolled in the School's first free online course on Ebola. Ghana is presently the headquarters for the UN Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER) in west Africa. Although we all hope the epidemic will ebb soon, if upon my return to Ghana my knowledge in Ebola is needed, I will be better equipped to assist.

'My course has been fantastic so far and I foresee other areas that I can target in my medical practice in Ghana. I have developed an interest in disability and, as an initial foray into this area, I am hoping to work with a group of LSHTM researchers who will be conducting a study on disability among children with cerebral palsy in Ghana, as part of my thesis. All these opportunities would not have been possible without my Commonwealth Scholarship this year.'

## HUNTING FOR NEW VIRUSES

Okechukwu Onianwa is a 2013 Commonwealth Scholar studying for a PhD in Virology at the University of Nottingham. He is researching the zoonotic potential of new viruses in potential rodent reservoirs.

A zoonosis is a disease or infection that can be naturally transmitted from animals to humans. Examples include influenza, rabies, and Ebola.





**Okechukwu Onianwa**, 2013 Commonwealth Scholar from Nigeria

Disease reservoirs harbour disease-causing organisms and therefore serve as potential sources of disease outbreaks.

'My interest in viruses and zoonosis was triggered by the rise in reports of emerging viruses around the globe. These pathogens seem to suddenly spring up in human and animal populations where there is previously no record of them. When I took up my studies in October 2013, I had no idea that the Ebola virus would pose a huge threat to humanity months later. Even with the present focus on the pathogen and its deadly disease, the reservoir is yet to be identified.'

The transmission of zoonotic pathogens is usually limited to the geographical location of the animals that serve as disease reservoirs. 'For example, Lassa fever is restricted to west African countries due to its association with the multimammate rat. The lymphocytic choriomeningitis virus, on the other

hand, has a global distribution due to its association with the house mouse. These facts have pushed researchers to take up the proactive role of searching for new viral pathogens in potential reservoirs.'

As rodents are well-known reservoirs for a number of zoonotic pathogens, an investigation to determine the presence of novel viruses in this order of mammals could prove useful in preventing future epidemics.

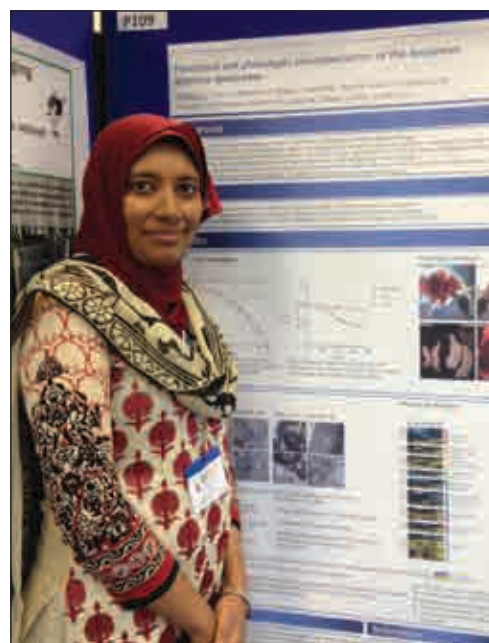
'Hopefully the skills I learn from this investigation can help with disease surveillance and monitoring in my home country. My knowledge on viral zoonosis is definitely much broader than before. This will be important in my career as an academic in Nigeria.'

### RESEARCHING MALARIA INTERVENTIONS

Zannatul Ferdous is a 2011 Commonwealth Scholar from Bangladesh, currently pursuing a PhD in Infection and Immunology at Imperial College London. She also held a Commonwealth Scholarship in 2006 to study MSc Molecular Genetics at the University of Liverpool.

'I am one of those lucky people who are blessed with a Commonwealth Scholarship twice. My experience of completing a Master's degree in the UK gave me a profound realisation that the opportunity offered by the CSC to Scholars from developing countries like Bangladesh could be invaluable for the socioeconomic development of these countries. This realisation, and the desire to focus my career on disease control interventions, led me to pursue a PhD in malaria research – one of the most severe public health problems affecting Bangladesh and countries worldwide.'

'I have joined one of the pioneering laboratories in malaria research to investigate the function of a gene of malaria vectors with the aim of developing effective interventions to block the transmission of this disease. While conducting my research, I have used many modern biological research tools to characterise this gene functionally and phenotypically. The initial results are significant and encouraging, and have elevated the prospects of this gene as a candidate for developing novel anti-mosquito compounds to control mosquito population and malaria transmission.'



**Zannatul Ferdous**, 2006 and 2011 Commonwealth Scholar from Bangladesh

Under her supervisor's guidance, Zannatul has used a chemical compound which is a known inhibitor of this candidate gene to reproduce similar effects at various stages of the lifecycle – larval and pupal, as well as adult.

'As insecticide resistance is a great challenge for vector control globally, the development of alternative insecticides should foster resistance management. We believe that these findings prove the potential for targeting this gene to develop new public health interventions including insecticides and malaria drugs.'

'Returning back home, I not only want to disseminate my experiences to my students and peer researchers, but also to establish an integrated public health research centre focusing on vector borne diseases in Bangladesh. For now, I am working on the development of the research centre.'

# IN YOUR OWN WORDS

*Corey Drakes is a 2014 Commonwealth Scholar from Barbados, studying MSc Medical Radiation Physics at University College London. Here, he explains how he developed a passion for his field of study, and his plans for the future.*

I saw medical radiation physics as an opportunity to make a positive difference in people's lives, and to work with cutting-edge technology while tapping into the field of medicine.



**M**edical radiation physics is essentially the application of physics concepts and theories to a clinical setting. This has a direct relationship to the treatment of cancer patients using ionising radiation.

Why medical radiation physics? Becoming a clinical medical physicist had always been a great passion of mine since being introduced to the basics of the course as a college student in Barbados. After conducting my own research, I considered it to be a very valuable and essential field for my country. I saw it as an opportunity to make a positive difference in people's lives, and to work with cutting-edge technology while tapping into the field of medicine. I decided to channel my academic life down this particular career path by completing a BSc in Mathematics and Physics at the University of The West Indies at Cave Hill.

Having volunteered with the Medical Physicist in the Oncology Department at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Barbados for the past year, I was afforded the opportunity to gain practical experience with all radiation machinery, radiotherapy planning systems and equipment used in this field. That experience gave me the opportunity to explore my future career as a trainee physicist and also set the foundation for my Master's programme at University College London (UCL).

Evidently, cancer is becoming more and more prevalent in the Western world, thus making it a cause for serious concern. As part of my degree at UCL, my research is in the area of breast cancer, the most widespread of all cancers. The definitive objective of my research is to fabricate anthropomorphic breast phantoms made from a combination of bio and non-biodegradable materials, which mimic the diffraction profiles of normal and neoplastic breast tissues to be used experimentally. The development of these anthropomorphic phantoms will help improve existing clinical diagnostic modalities used for detecting carcinomas and other forms of cancer in the human breast in its earliest stage.

I strongly believe that I can use the skills and knowledge gained at UCL to hasten the development of this discipline in my country, because there is a dire need for another medical physicist. Once I am qualified, I intend to seek a permanent position at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Barbados and I believe that, if given the opportunity, I will be equipped to accelerate the improvement of the facilities there. Once I am established as a medical physicist, it is my goal to implement a programme in which students can pursue a degree in this field in Barbados. Should this be possible, it would allow Barbadian and other Caribbean students to pursue this degree at the University of the West Indies, giving them the opportunity to progress in one of the most critical and ever-expanding professions to date.

# REMOVING THE DIVIDE: RESPECTING AND UNDERSTANDING CULTURES

*How three of the CSC Regional Networks worked with Cardiff University to enhance the researcher experience.*



**Dacia Leslie**, 2011 Commonwealth Scholar from Jamaica and Coordinator of the CSC Wales and Northern Ireland Regional Network



Representatives of the **Wales, Northern Ireland and South West Regional Networks** with conference keynote speakers HE Aloun Ndombet-Assamba and Professor Iain Borden (front)

**R**emoving the divide: respecting and understanding cultures', a postgraduate interdisciplinary conference, took place in June 2014 at the School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University. Organised by the CSC Wales, Northern Ireland and South West Regional Networks in partnership with researchers from Cardiff University, the successful event brought together different subject areas, nationalities and institutions to promote the Commonwealth's values of dialogue, respect and understanding through research.

The conference was inspired by the *Civil Paths to Peace* report by the Commonwealth Commission on Respect and Understanding. Launched in 2007, the report was the result of a mandate that called for an examination of the importance of respect and understanding of different social groups within Commonwealth countries.

Despite complex and varying developments across a vast range of nation states, the Commonwealth still provides a unifying bond linking together a fairly disparate set of countries. Under the theme of 'Removing the divide', this conference brought together students undertaking research on varying aspects of culture. Through the exploration and dissemination of research, the presentations enabled delegates to learn from varying disciplinary approaches and break out of a Western ethnocentric approach to avoid the pitfalls of 'orientalism' and 'occidentalism'.

The conference keynote speeches were given by Professor Iain Borden, Vice-Dean of Communication and Professor of Architecture and Urban Culture at the Bartlett, University College London; and HE Aloun Ndombet-Assamba, Jamaican High Commissioner to the United Kingdom and former Minister of Tourism, Entertainment and Culture.

Ten Commonwealth Scholars presented their research at the conference, on topics ranging from culture and climate change to democracy and good governance, and from tracking glaciers to the reintegration of offenders.

- **Valentine Ambe**, 2013 Commonwealth Shared Scholar from Cameroon, MSc Gender and International Relations, University of Bristol
- **Lavanya Ashokkumar**, 2012 Commonwealth Scholar from India, PhD Remote Sensing, Swansea University
- **Philip Conteh**, 2013 Commonwealth Shared Scholar from Sierra Leone, MSc Leadership for Sustainable Development, Queen's University Belfast
- **Dacia Leslie**, 2011 Commonwealth Scholar from Jamaica, PhD Criminology, Cardiff University
- **Cyprian Misinde**, 2011 Commonwealth Scholar from Uganda, DCh Childhood Studies, Queen's University Belfast
- **Seith Mugume**, 2012 Commonwealth Scholar from Uganda, PhD Environmental Studies, University of Exeter
- **Peter Namphande**, 2013 Commonwealth

Split-site Scholar from Malawi, PhD Citizenship Education, University of Ulster and University of Malawi

- **Rweyemamu Ndbalema**, 2012 Commonwealth Scholar from Tanzania, PhD Management – Employee Engagement, University of Bath
- **Kenisha Nelson**, 2013 Commonwealth Scholar from Jamaica, PhD Psychology, Cardiff University
- **Duncan Scott**, 2012 Commonwealth Scholar from South Africa, PhD Sociology, Queen's University Belfast

Organisation of the conference was led by Dacia Leslie, Commonwealth Scholar and Coordinator of the CSC Wales and Northern Ireland Regional Network. The Regional Networks connect Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows based in the same region while studying in the UK. Active involvement in the Regional Networks is an important way for Scholars and Fellows to become connected to a wider research community, enabling academic and professional development, and providing valuable networking opportunities. The event was a testament to the achievements of all the Scholars who took part, and a fantastic opportunity to showcase the range of important research being undertaken by Commonwealth Scholars.

Photos of the event are available on the CSC Flickr page at [flickr.com/cscuk](http://flickr.com/cscuk)



# LOOKING AHEAD TO 19CCEM: ACHIEVING QUALITY EDUCATION FOR EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT IN SMALL STATES

*Ahead of this year's Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (19CCEM), we asked three Commonwealth Scholars from small states to share their views on the education priorities that ministers should address.*

The 19th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (19CCEM) taking place in the Bahamas in June 2015 will explore the theme of 'Quality education for equitable development: performance, paths and productivity'. The objectives of 19CCEM include examining key issues in education; considering barriers to equity, access and quality; and discussing how to align strategies with new education priorities in the post-2015 development framework.

The conference will focus on the Commonwealth-wide drive to embed high standards within teaching and learning in order to ensure quality education systems. This goal is supported by three key measures: performance, which ensures function and adaptability in processes such as assessment, curriculum and teaching methodologies; paths, which examines the routes into education with a focus on non-traditional pathways; and productivity, which looks at both the direct results of investments and the wider impact on societal development.

Small states – which comprise 31 of 53 Commonwealth member states – will be given a particular focus at 19CCEM, with a special meeting of ministers to discuss critical and problematic issues affecting their countries. Small states are uniquely affected by challenges and issues related to their size, disperse populations, and volatility of economics and weather.

## CHALLENGES ACROSS THE EDUCATION SECTOR

Mia Amour Jules (2012 Commonwealth Split-site Scholar from Barbados, PhD Educational Psychology, University of Nottingham and University of the West Indies at Cave Hill) identifies several examples of issues within the education sector in the Caribbean. She is an Assistant Lecturer in the School of Education at the University of the West Indies at Cave Hill and a Registered Clinical Psychologist.



**Mia Jules**, 2012 Commonwealth Scholar from Barbados

'Caribbean educational systems are confronted with a number of problems which span across multiple levels, with particular issues in the early childhood, primary, and secondary stages. Numeracy levels within primary schools are one such area of concern. Numeracy underpins many higher-order cognitive skills needed in both academic and real world activities; if learning difficulties are not addressed at the primary school level, the problems are exacerbated upon entry into secondary school.

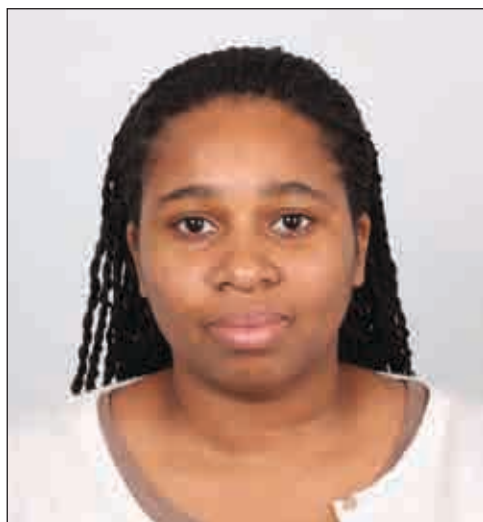
It can be argued that this carryover effect from primary to secondary level is contributing to trends whereby only 50% of Caribbean students are leaving secondary school with an acceptable level of certification.

'The suitability of our secondary school curricula must also be interrogated if they are to prepare students for the 21st century. This would require a change in teaching methods from the predominantly teacher-centred didactic model to a student-centred cooperative learning environment, with effective integration of technology. Given the power of the peer group among this population, virtual classrooms and peer-to-peer online forums are some of the ways that newer communication technologies can be used to connect students across and within Caribbean islands, thereby widening the scope of students' understanding of regional issues and improving the quality of their learning experience.

'Another issue in the Caribbean is the need for the evaluation of students using culturally specific psychological and psycho-educational tests. Research funding for the development of Caribbean-based instruments should be made a high priority, as many of the assessment tools and protocols currently used are developed outside the region. Psychological assessments are crucial to identifying and addressing the social, emotional, and developmental difficulties demonstrated by school-age children. In addition, more guidance counsellors and school psychologists should be deployed at all levels of the education system. This would allow for more psycho-educational assessments to be carried out and hence more student specific recommendations can be made to address the educational and developmental difficulties of our students.

'Such policies would help to marry the needs of parents, teachers and students, thereby enhancing the performance of our education systems.'





**Gill Francis**, 2014 Commonwealth Shared Scholar from St Lucia



**Gregory Julius**, 2013 Commonwealth Scholar from Montserrat

## PRIORITISING TEACHER QUALITY

Gill Francis (2014 Commonwealth Shared Scholar from St Lucia, MPhil Education, University of Cambridge) is a Primary School Teacher and strongly believes that the pathway to quality education is through instituting measures aimed at improving teacher quality at all levels of education.

'In setting priorities, consideration must be given to initiatives that encourage teachers to apply research-based strategies to the context-specific challenges that they face. Developing the teacher-as-a-researcher mentality will require investment in training, and sustained monitoring and evaluative processes.

'Teacher professional development sessions should focus on imparting expert knowledge while incorporating forums that provide teachers with a platform to showcase the creative ways in which they are rising to the challenge of delivering quality education to their student body in the face of economic hardship. By acknowledging teachers' knowledge, governments show that they also value the capabilities and accomplishments of their own human resource.

'Finally, there is a need to refine the descriptions of productivity in education, so that they are relevant to the unique nuances and idiosyncrasies of the sector and capture the link between productivity and remunerative incentives. The time has come for policies that acknowledge the descriptive labels of teacher quality, so as to distinguish the novice teacher from the more experienced teacher by measures other than length of service. Such distinctions will contribute to building high teacher morale, which is necessary for motivating teachers to work towards quality standards through increased productivity.

'I am aware that priority decisions are influenced by a myriad of factors, both internal and external

to small states but, based on my involvement in the education sector at home and abroad, I am convinced that policy decisions that look towards increasing teacher quality will guarantee quality education for all.'

## MANAGING EDUCATION TO MAXIMISE POTENTIAL

Gregory Julius (2013 Commonwealth Scholar from Montserrat, PhD Educational Leadership, University of Birmingham) considers quality education to be a prerequisite for sustainable development in his home country. Gregory is Headteacher of Brades Primary School and has held roles on the boards of both the Montserrat and Caribbean Unions of Teachers.

'In the context of 19CCEM, quality education refers to the act of maximising the educational potential of students by providing a stimulating environment. It also takes into account the development of each student's intellectual, cultural, emotional, spiritual, physical, and social capabilities to their fullest potential. In light of this, I outline six crucial issues along with key questions which I would hope to see raised and discussed by ministers.

### 1. Recruitment and retention

'What recruitment and retention strategies are most successful and cost effective? How does teacher compensation affect this, especially across-the-board salary increases? What can be done in the existing situation to make teacher recruitment beneficial for all institutions?

### 2. Induction and mentoring

'Are the induction programmes supported by adequate fiscal resources? Do they meet the criteria for success? Beyond induction and mentoring, are the character and climate of schools supportive of both young and veteran teachers and conducive to effective teaching?

### 3. Teacher preparation and education

'How can we ensure that teacher preparation

programmes adequately equip teachers to meet the challenges they face in today's classrooms and in a standards-based environment? Is there a balance between the theoretical and practical variables in teacher education?

### 4. Professional development

'Are there adequate opportunities, resources and support for professional development? What types of incentives are available to encourage teachers to pursue effective professional development? What can policymakers do specifically to make more time and more job-embedded opportunities available for professional growth?

### 5. Evaluation

'Are evaluation standards in schools aligned with national performance objectives? How should inputs and outputs be balanced to craft a fair and equitable teacher evaluation system? How can the relationship between student performance and classroom teaching be accurately measured?

### 6. Compensation

'Is the current wage package for teachers equitable in relation to other professions? Do existing salary schedules provide additional rewards for effective teachers? Has any thought been given to allocating financial resources to a performance-based compensation system?

'Careful consideration of some of these issues would be a positive step in the direction of improving education for sustainable development in small states. It is imperative that teachers' voices are a major component of any discussions relating to the performance, path and productivity of quality education. It is in the classroom that this notion of quality will be truly enacted and subsequently achieved.'

# OUR ALUMNI

## Alumni news

### RESEARCHING APPROACHES TO MALARIA IN RURAL UGANDA



**David Musoke**, 2007 Commonwealth Distance Learning Scholar from Uganda

David Musoke (2007 Commonwealth Distance Learning Scholar from Uganda, MSc International Primary Health Care, University College London) has been awarded a postgraduate training grant by the World Health Organization's (WHO) Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR). The grant will support David's PhD research on an integrated approach to malaria prevention in rural communities in Uganda at Cardiff Metropolitan University. David, an Assistant Lecturer at the Makerere University School of Public Health, Uganda, recently presented part of his research findings at the 13th International Federation of Environmental Health (IFEH) World Congress. At the same event, he was elected as the Secretary of the IFEH Africa group; he intends to use the position to raise the profile of environmental health in Uganda and on the African continent.

### CAMPAIGNING FOR HEPATITIS B VACCINATIONS FOR INDIAN HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Dr Rishi Bali (2009 Commonwealth Scholar from India, Medical Training in Infection Control, Imperial



**Dr Rishi Bali** (right), 2009 Commonwealth Scholar from India, with **Dr Harsh Vardhan**, Indian Minister of Health

College London) has achieved success in his campaign for the mandatory vaccination of health care workers against Hepatitis B in India. A recent resolution passed by the General Dental Council of India has made such vaccination mandatory. Rishi has also met with the Indian Minister of Health to present the case for all Indian health care workers to be vaccinated, and submitted a proposal to the Indian Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. There are currently more than 50 million carriers of Hepatitis B in India.

## Awards and prizes

Salman Ahmad (2013 Commonwealth Shared Scholar from Pakistan, MSc International Business, University of Liverpool) is one of the first winners of the Queen's Young Leaders Award. The Queen's Young Leaders Programme celebrates the achievements of young people taking the lead to transform the lives of others and making a lasting difference in their community. Salman will be presented with his award by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II later this year in London, UK.

Imtiaz Ahmed (2010 Commonwealth Scholar from Bangladesh, MSc Sound and Vibration Studies, University of Southampton) has been awarded the IDB Cambridge Trust International Scholarship to study for his PhD at the Cavendish Laboratory, University of Cambridge.

Matthew Beetar (2009 Commonwealth Scholar from South Africa, MA Gender and Media, University of Sussex) has been awarded the Chancellor's International Research Scholarship by the University of Sussex for his PhD in cultural studies, focusing on prejudice, media and social intervention in South Africa.

Dr Shaheen Begum (2008 Commonwealth Scholar from Pakistan, PhD Environment, University of York) has won the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan's Best University Teacher Award for her work at Fatima Jinnah Women University.

Dr Anne Dance (2010 Commonwealth Scholar from Canada, PhD World Environmental History, University of Stirling) has been awarded a postdoctoral fellowship for 2014-2015 at the Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada, through Resources and Sustainable Development in the Arctic (ReSDA). Her research will involve the reclamation of contaminated sites in the Arctic.

Professor Md Tofazzal Islam (2012 Commonwealth Academic Fellow from Bangladesh, Biotechnology, University of Nottingham) has won the Bangladesh Academy of Science Gold Medal Award 2011 in Biological Sciences for his contribution to the field of microbial chemical ecology and biotechnology. The award was presented by Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of Bangladesh, in April 2014.



**Professor Md Tofazzal Islam** (right), 2012 Commonwealth Academic Fellow from Bangladesh, receiving the Bangladesh Academy of Science Gold Medal Award from **Sheikh Hasina**, Prime Minister of Bangladesh

Dr Rahul Kala (2010 Commonwealth Scholar from India, PhD Robotics – Cybernetics, University of Reading) has won the Best PhD Dissertation Award from the Institute of Electrical and Electronics



**Dr Rahul Kala** (right), 2010 Commonwealth Scholar from India, receiving the Best PhD Dissertation Award at the 2014 IEEE Intelligent Transportation Systems Conference

Engineers (IEEE) Intelligent Transportation Systems Society. Rahul's thesis looked at adapting the technology behind autonomous vehicles, which drive by themselves without human input, to work in chaotic traffic conditions such as those found in his home country of India.

Dr Sunil Kumar (2010 Commonwealth Fellow from India, Comparative Politics, University of Oxford) has won the International Political Science Association's (IPSA) 2014 Global South Award for making a distinct research contribution to the countries of the global South. Sunil was presented with his award at IPSA's 23rd World Congress in 2014, where he also gave a prize lecture on 'Changing landscape of India's electoral democracy and political demography: a study of the 2014 elections'.

Dr Thomas John 'Jock' Murray (1967 Commonwealth Medical Scholar from Canada, Neurology, University of London, and 1985 Commonwealth Medical Fellow, Neurological Education, University College London) has been inducted into the Canadian Medical Hall of Fame for his contributions to multiple sclerosis research, medical education and medical history.

Professor Ainun Nishat (1977 Commonwealth Scholar from Bangladesh, PhD Civil Engineering, University of Strathclyde) has won the Prokriti O Jibon Foundation and Channel i Nature Conservation Award 2014 for his contribution to the conservation of the biodiversity, environment and nature of Bangladesh.

Atiur Rahman (1978 Commonwealth Scholar from Bangladesh, PhD Economics, SOAS, University of London), Governor of the Bangladesh Bank, has been named Central Banker of the Year 2015 in the Asia-Pacific region by *The Banker* magazine.

Harmit Singh Thind, (1988 Commonwealth Scholar from India, PhD Soil Science, University of Reading) has been elected as a Fellow of the National Academy of Agricultural Sciences, India, for his contribution towards the enhancement of nutrient and water use efficiency in rice-wheat and cotton-wheat cropping systems.

## Recent appointments

Dr Saleem Badat (1995 Commonwealth Scholar from South Africa, DPhil Southern African Studies, University of York) has been appointed Program Director for International Higher Education and Strategic Projects at the Andrew Mellon Foundation, USA. Saleem was previously Vice-Chancellor of Rhodes University, South Africa.

Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury MP (1996 Commonwealth Scholar from Bangladesh, PhD Law, University of Essex), Speaker of the Bangladesh Parliament, has become the first Bangladeshi to be elected as Chairperson of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA).

Professor Rafiqul Islam (2005 Commonwealth Academic Fellow from Bangladesh, Chemical Engineering, University of Nottingham), recently appointed Director of the Center for Climate Change Study and Resource Utilization at the University of Dhaka, has become the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation's first Ambassador Scientist in Bangladesh.

Vijender Kumar (2009 Commonwealth Academic Fellow from India, Family Law, King's College London) has been appointed Vice-Chancellor of the National Law University and Judicial Academy, India.

## Publications

Musa Afolagbade Banwo (2008 Commonwealth Scholar from Nigeria, MSc Public Policy, University College London) has published an article on 'Factors Affecting the Poverty Reduction Potential of Microfinance' in the *International Public Policy Review* (8.1: 57-62, 2014).

Sarah L Thornton (1988 Commonwealth Scholar from Canada, MPhil Popular Music, University of Strathclyde) has published *33 Artists in 3 Acts* (W W Norton & Company, 2014), a book about her personal encounters with the world's most important contemporary artists. Sarah was previously Chief Correspondent on contemporary art for *The Economist*.

## New alumni members

The CSC alumni network continues to grow, with Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows from both recent and earlier years joining as alumni members. Alumni who have joined lately include:

- Lou Marinoff (1984 Commonwealth Scholar from Canada, PhD Physics, University of London) – Professor of Philosophy at the City College of New York, USA, and founding President of the American Philosophical Practitioners Association
- Kennei Gbessay Momoh (2010 Commonwealth Distance Learning Scholar from Sierra Leone, MSc Risk, Crisis and Disaster Management, University of Leicester) – Crisis Manager at the UN Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER), Liberia
- Dr Sunil Verma (2003 Commonwealth Scholar from India, DPhil Medical Oncology, University of Oxford) – Principal Scientist at the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology, India

Have you changed job or email or postal address? Let us know at [alumni@cscuk.org.uk](mailto:alumni@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.



# ALUMNI PROFILE

*Monira Rahman, 2012 Commonwealth Professional Fellow from Bangladesh and award-winning human rights activist, on her latest challenge.*



**Monira Rahman** (centre), 2012 Commonwealth Professional Fellow from Bangladesh, with survivors of acid attacks who have been supported by the Acid Survivors Foundation

**M**y Commonwealth Professional Fellowship opened the door for me to think 'bigger'. I have been working within the field of violence against women and girls for the last 25 years. For the last 15 years, I have worked to combat acid violence, a particular form of gender-based violence. My Commonwealth Professional Fellowship in 2012 was hosted by Acid Survivors International, and I had the opportunity to learn about innovative evidence-based psychosocial care services for people with mental health problems from my placements with the Centre for Appearance Research (CAR) at the University of West England and Changing Faces, a UK-based charity.

My Professional Fellowship inspired me to do two things upon my return to Bangladesh. First, I designed the first international conference to set standards for psychosocial care services for burn victims in Dhaka, with experts from CAR and Changing Faces facilitating the process. Over 21 organisations from seven countries participated in the conference, and I am pleased to report that the Bangladesh Ministry of Women and Children Affairs has now taken over the task of mainstreaming the standard of psychosocial care.

Secondly, I left my job as Executive Director of the Acid Survivors Foundation in July 2013 and started my research on mental health. 450 million people worldwide are suffering from mental illness, which is the fourth highest cause of death in global indexes. Depression is the second leading cause of disability,

yet depression is one of the most neglected areas in health and development, especially in my home country. According to a survey conducted by the World Health Organization (WHO), 16% of adults (25 million people) and 18% of children (29 million) in Bangladesh are suffering from mental illness – although the actual number is likely to be much higher. However, Bangladeshi legislation is still based on the Lunacy Act 1912. There is no mental health authority in the country and only 0.05% of the national health budget is allocated for mental health. There are only 800 psychiatric beds for 160 million people, and 200 psychiatrists and 50 clinical psychologists, which can meet only 1% of current needs. There are no community-based rehabilitation services for mental health.

To change this situation, I found inspiration from my experience with the Acid Survivors Foundation. When the foundation was established in 1999, there was a lack of legislation to control the use of acid, a severe scarcity of and inefficiency in medical care, and an absence of rehabilitation services for the victims of acid attacks. But now there are two new laws – one to control acid availability and another for speedy trial of the perpetrator – with a high-level inter-ministerial body, the National Acid Control Council, to ensure effective implementation. The Bangladesh government also established a fund to compensate acid attack victims for their treatment and rehabilitation. More importantly, the number of acid attacks has reduced from 500 in 2002 to 83 in 2013.

With these achievements, in 2014 I established an NGO named Innovation for Wellbeing Foundation (IWF) to promote mental health equity for sustainable development. IWF is working in three main areas:

1. Building better life
2. Influencing policy reforms
3. Reducing stigma and discrimination and promoting mental health equity

IWF is the founding secretariat of the Bangladesh Mental Health Network (BMHN), the first platform for all relevant stakeholders, including service users, to work together on mental health in Bangladesh. IWF and BMHN have played a crucial role in reviewing the draft Mental Health Act 2014. IWF is now working with Mental Health First Aid England in the design and development of an internationally-accredited training course titled Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) in Bangladesh. In March 2015, a group of experts from the UK will visit Bangladesh to train staff for the MHFA programme.

I am now looking for models that are culturally, socially and economically appropriate for a comprehensive, integrated and holistic approach to aid the recovery, rehabilitation and economic empowerment of people suffering from mental illness. I have a dream to develop IWF as an institution for identifying innovative, evidence-based and practical solutions to these complex, difficult and neglected problems which seriously affect the development of a country.

# WORKING TOGETHER TO COMBAT ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION

*Dr Mousumi Chatterjee undertook a Commonwealth Professional Fellowship at the British Geological Survey in 2013. The experience has led to further research collaboration with her host, Dr Michael Watts.*



**Mousumi Chatterjee**, 2012 Commonwealth Professional Fellow, with her host, **Dr Michael Watts**

'It was like my dream came true,' says Dr Mousumi Chatterjee, 'when I opened the email informing me of my success in attaining a Commonwealth Professional Fellowship. I was happy as I was going to experience everything that I had wanted to learn for the previous three years'. Mousumi, a biogeochemist working on mercury pollution in the Indian Sundarban wetland ecosystem, wanted to highlight the mercury exposure of different fish within an estuarine food chain, in order to measure direct human exposure levels. 'My desire was fulfilled when I started my Professional Fellowship with the British Geological Survey (BGS). Not only is the BGS well equipped with sophisticated analytical facilities, but the organisation also provided me with expert guidance and a friendly environment, and encouraged me in the new practical implementation of scientific ideas.'

During her Professional Fellowship, Mousumi used the BGS Inorganic Geochemistry laboratories' instrumental and analytical facilities to determine the degree of contamination from mercury and a number of elements in a variety of edible fish, polychaete worms, and bivalve molluscs. 'The results were fascinating, as the level of mercury contamination clearly signifies the position in the food chain. Among fish, the pattern of contamination was different owing to their varying feeding habits.'

Mousumi benefited from several scientific exchanges during her stay. 'I visited the Marine

Sciences Department at the University of Bangor, where I learnt how to extract the otolith (a small bone known as 'fish ear bone'), which acts as a recorder of environmental chemistry, from hilsa fish. This resulted in a research project in collaboration with the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore after my return to India. I also had the opportunity to attend and present my research findings at the International Conference of Mercury as a Global Pollutant 2013, held in Edinburgh, which brought together the world's leading experts on mercury contamination of the environment.

'I consider myself very lucky to have worked at the BGS in such an analytical and innovative environment with a good exchange of ideas and the chance to develop scientific understanding into practical implementation. My findings during my Professional Fellowship resulted in the publication of a journal article which I hope will be used to improve the quality of wetland ecosystems.

'My Professional Fellowship was fruitful enough not only to implement independent research ideas in my home country of India, but also to build long-lasting research networks with the BGS. I am still in contact with Michael and now we are collaborating to work on global road dust pollution. I enjoyed every moment at the British Geological Survey, whether it was working in the laboratory or hanging out with colleagues in the canteen.'

Mousumi was the second Commonwealth Professional Fellow hosted by Dr Michael Watts, Head of the Inorganic Geochemistry laboratories at BGS. 'Mousumi came to the laboratories to learn how to use a range of modern analytical equipment. Using her own samples as part of the training also allowed for some joint research to link our interests in environmental exposure to pollutants and influence on human health. The use of specific samples for a study has proved invaluable in providing the emphasis and motivation for the training in sample analyses through to data processing and interpretation techniques.

'For both Commonwealth Professional Fellows I have hosted, it was important to expose them to the variety of opportunities in the UK, from work through to visiting the variety of tourist and scenic locations. They were initially helped in doing so, but soon unleashed their own enthusiasm for exploring the UK and grew to enjoy the environment and culture. We will soon welcome two more Professional Fellows from Malawi and Zimbabwe, and I hope that they will gain the benefits achieved by their predecessors. From a host perspective, there are the obvious opportunities to develop collaborative networks and partners, but also the chance for other members of a team or junior scientists to broaden their horizons through training or working alongside Professional Fellows from overseas.'



# 2014 BEST JOURNAL ARTICLE PRIZE

The CSC and Taylor & Francis Group are delighted to announce two joint winners of the 2014 Taylor & Francis Commonwealth Scholar Best Journal Article Prize: **Dr Benjamin Irving** and **Dr Sandhya Sukumaran**.



**Dr Benjamin Irving**, 2008 Commonwealth Scholar from South Africa and joint winner of the 2014 Taylor & Francis Commonwealth Scholar Best Journal Article Prize

Dr Benjamin Irving is a 2008 Commonwealth Scholar from South Africa; he completed a PhD in Biomedical Engineering and Medical Image Analysis at University College London (UCL) in 2012. Benjamin says 'It's an honour to be awarded the 2014 Best Journal Article Prize. This prize is one of the examples of the effort that the CSC puts into maintaining strong links with alumni and encouraging continued development.

'My Commonwealth Scholarship was an amazing experience, and allowed me to work with top universities while focusing on challenges from my home country, South Africa. As part of my PhD at UCL, I developed computer methods to assist in the detection and analysis of paediatric tuberculosis, in collaboration with the University of Cape Town and expert radiologists and pulmonologists from Tygerberg Hospital and the University of the Witwatersrand.

Benjamin's prize-winning article, 'Computer assisted detection of abnormal airway variation in CT scans related to paediatric tuberculosis', was published in the *Medical Image Analysis Journal* in October 2014. 'My article is part of my PhD research, and tackles the challenging and underexplored area of detecting the signs and extent of involvement of paediatric pulmonary tuberculosis from medical images.

'Pulmonary tuberculosis is very poorly detected in children. This article develops an automated framework for detection and analysis of airway abnormalities linked to paediatric tuberculosis by segmenting the airways and then analysing the structure and shape of the bronchial tree. As part of this method, 90 healthy paediatric patients with tuberculosis were used to train statistical classification algorithms to automatically detect abnormal airway deformation. This tool can be used to detect the

region of airway involvement from CT images and visualise the type of compression or deformation for the clinician – potentially avoiding the need for invasive bronchoscopies. This work has particular significance to tuberculosis endemic areas, such as South Africa, where better detection and assessment of this disease is crucial.

'Since completing my PhD, I've been involved in a number of projects, including the development of a new dual modality mammography system at an exciting start-up in South Africa. I'm currently a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Oxford, UK, specialising in cancer research and focusing on medical image analysis methods to improve patient monitoring and response to therapy. The skills I learnt during my PhD research have been invaluable in my new projects, while my PhD research is also being translated to new applications.'

Dr Sandhya Sukumaran, a 2008 Commonwealth Scholar from India, completed a PhD in Aquatic Eco-Genotoxicology in 2011. She is currently a scientist at the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, India, focusing on molecular ecology and biodiversity. Sandhya says 'I was so excited and happy to receive news of winning the 2014 Best Journal Article Prize. I am really thankful to the CSC for selecting me for this prestigious award; winning is a morale booster in helping me become more dedicated to my research career.'

Sandhya studied for her PhD at the University of East Anglia, and was inspired by the research environment and particularly her supervisor, Professor Alastair Grant. 'Working with Professor Grant was a great experience and he motivated me to think big and beyond limits. I was deeply influenced by the way research is carried out in the UK and I am still trying to keep up with that pace in my new laboratory environment.'

Sandhya's prize-winning article, 'Multigenerational demographic responses of sexual and asexual *Artemia* to chronic genotoxicity by a reference mutagen', was published in the *Aquatic Toxicology*





**Dr Sandhya Sukumaran**, 2008 Commonwealth Scholar from India and joint winner of the 2014 Taylor & Francis Commonwealth Scholar Best Journal Article Prize

*Journal* in November 2013. 'The broad aim of the article was to understand the multigenerational effects of chronic genotoxicity in the aquatic ecosystem and how this is affecting populations of aquatic organisms.

'Increasing environmental pollution is bringing about substantial alterations in ecosystems, and the ecological role of different organisms in ecosystems is altered slowly. Erosion of genetic diversity also reduces the resilience of ecosystems to environmental impacts. Environmental pollutants can be genotoxic, teratogenic or carcinogenic; genotoxicity brings about a direct impact on the genetic constitution of an organism by inducing point mutations, deletions, inversions, and gross

chromosomal alterations. Chronic genotoxicity is more important than acute genotoxicity in bringing about these changes. Further, such genotoxic effects cause emergent effects on populations by reducing or altering the population growth rate. The reproductive strategies of an organism influence the demographic responses to such effects due to pollutants.

'I studied the multigenerational demographic responses of sexual and asexual *Artemia* (brine shrimp) to chronic genotoxicity. The results showed

more adverse generational effects on asexual species, whereas sexual species were able to mitigate the effects substantially over generations. Our study could clearly demarcate the effect of sexual and asexual strategies on demographic responses of invertebrates, and so risk management studies should consider reproductive modes and decision-making should be based on multigenerational studies.'

The Taylor & Francis Commonwealth Scholar Best Journal Article Prize is awarded to a Commonwealth Scholar who submits the most outstanding article published in a recognised peer-reviewed journal. This annual prize, first awarded in 2012, aims to encourage and reward the publication achievements of Commonwealth Scholars who are completing or have recently completed their doctoral studies.

Dr John Kirkland, Executive Secretary of the CSC, said 'The Best Journal Article Prize recognises the academic achievements of Commonwealth Scholars and highlights their groundbreaking research. We congratulate Benjamin and Sandhya on the high calibre of their work. The CSC is particularly pleased to be able to honour two winners this year, and thanks Taylor & Francis for their support. We also congratulate all the Commonwealth Scholars who entered on the publication of their research'.

Taylor & Francis Group is one of the world's leading publishers of scholarly journals, books, ebooks and reference works, with content spanning all areas of humanities, social sciences, behavioural sciences, science, and technology and medicine. Dr David Green, Global Journals Publishing Director at Taylor & Francis, said 'We were delighted with the articles submitted for consideration – and with the two outstanding winners – and are pleased to support the vital work of the CSC in aiding scholars around the world and furthering top research'.

You can read Benjamin's article at [bit.ly/1Jmbkjb](http://bit.ly/1Jmbkjb) (with supplementary interactive visualisations at [bit.ly/17GEh8F](http://bit.ly/17GEh8F)) and Sandhya's article at [bit.ly/1zHuxk6](http://bit.ly/1zHuxk6)

# NETWORKS AND EVENTS



The CSC has organised a wide range of **events for Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows in the UK** over the past few months, including a lecture at the University of Edinburgh in May 2014, (clockwise from left) an afternoon tea reception at the Houses of Parliament in July 2014, our first-ever Farewell Event for departing Scholars also in July 2014, a workshop on maximising the impact of research evidence in August 2014, and our annual Welcome Programme for new Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows in November 2014.



## Alumni events

### AUSTRALIA

Nearly 1,200 Australian citizens have held Commonwealth Scholarships funded by the CSC. The current Coordinator of the alumni association is seeking help from fellow Australian alumni to reactivate the group – if you are interested, contact us at [alumni@cscuk.org.uk](mailto:alumni@cscuk.org.uk)

### BANGLADESH

In September 2014, more than 30 alumni met the then Chair of the CSC, Professor Tim Unwin, at a reception hosted by HE Robert Gibson, British High Commissioner to Bangladesh. Alumni guests included A K Azad Chowdhury, State Minister for Education, and Atiur Rahman, Governor of the Bangladesh Bank.

The Bangladesh Association of Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows (BACSFAF) met in November 2014 and launched their online presence with both Facebook and LinkedIn pages.



**Bangladeshi alumni** with Barbara Wickham (right), British Council Director, Bangladesh

Alumni also met Dr John Kirkland, Executive Secretary of the CSC, during his visit to Dhaka in January 2015.

### CAMEROON

The Cameroon Alumni of Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows (CACSAF) have recently formulated their statute. If you are an alumni member from

Cameroon and would like to find out more about upcoming activities, contact us at [alumni@cscuk.org.uk](mailto:alumni@cscuk.org.uk) and we will put you in touch with CACSAF.

### CANADA

The CSC is seeking a new Coordinator for the Canadian alumni association. If you are a Canadian recipient of a Commonwealth Scholarship and think you may have a little spare time to help, contact us at [alumni@cscuk.org.uk](mailto:alumni@cscuk.org.uk)

### GHANA

More than 60 alumni met at a reception in Accra in November 2014 to initiate and form a Ghanaian Commonwealth Alumni Association. Award holders from as far back as 1975 mingled with recent alumni who had just returned to Ghana. The highlight of the evening was alumni sharing their fond memories of studying in the UK and talking about how their scholarship has enabled them to rise to the top of their chosen professions. Saadia Bobtoya (2007 Commonwealth Shared Scholar, MSc Environmental Management, University of Nottingham) said 'It



was a great experience meeting other Scholars and Fellows who benefitted from this life-changing opportunity'.

## INDIA



**Dr Rajiv Chawla**, 2007 Commonwealth Academic Fellow from India, with Dr John Kirkland, Executive Secretary of the CSC, at a meeting in New Delhi in January 2015

The Indian Association of Commonwealth Alumni continues to develop, and met in May, June, October, November and December 2014. The group is currently in the process of formally registering as an alumni association.

Dr John Kirkland, Executive Secretary of the CSC, met alumni during his visit to New Delhi in January 2015.

## KENYA

The Kenyan Commonwealth Alumni Network held its annual general meeting in November 2014. The meeting featured a panel discussion on 'The Commonwealth in today's world and the impact of the Commonwealth Scholarship scheme' with Professor Tim Unwin, the then Chair of the CSC; Professor Olive Mugenda, Vice-Chancellor of Kenyatta University; Dr Maurice Okoth, President of the Kenya Commonwealth Alumni Network; and Archer Arina, Assistant Director at the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology.

'The Commonwealth is still relevant today as a body that improves standards across the countries,' said Olive. 'It creates global networks which allow people to make connections and benefit in their personal and professional lives.' As the discussion closed, Tim reminded alumni that they are Commonwealth Scholars for life, saying 'We want to walk with you through your careers'.

On behalf of the Kenya Commonwealth Alumni Network, Tim was presented with a traditional

gift of a Maasai stool and made a Kenyan elder as thanks for his contribution to scholarships and development in Kenya.

## MALTA

The next Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) will take place in Malta in November 2015. If you are one of our nearly 300 Maltese alumni, let us know what you have been up to since your award – get in touch at [alumni@cscuk.org.uk](mailto:alumni@cscuk.org.uk)

## MAURITIUS

Members of the United Kingdom Commonwealth Alumni Mauritius Chapter (UKCAC) met for their annual dinner in December 2014. If you would like to find out more about UKCAC, contact [madev.balloo@eeas.europa.eu](mailto:madev.balloo@eeas.europa.eu)

## SRI LANKA

Sri Lankan alumni joined a pre-departure briefing session for new Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows in August 2014. A reception was held afterwards, attended by Professor Tim Unwin, the then Chair of the CSC, and featuring speeches from alumni about their scholarship experiences.



**Sri Lankan alumni** with Professor Tim Unwin (centre left), then Chair of the CSC, at a reception in August 2014

## UGANDA

An interactive panel discussion for Ugandan alumni was held in Kampala in October 2014, on the topic 'Global development challenges post-2015 and how higher education in Uganda can contribute to addressing challenges'. The panel comprised Professor Ros Wade, then Commonwealth Scholarship Commissioner; Professor John Sebuwufu, Chancellor of Kyambogo University; and Elizabeth Gabona, Director of Higher Education at the Ministry of Education and Sport. The discussion was moderated by Dr Ibrahim Kasirye (2007 Commonwealth Scholar, PhD International Trade, University of Manchester).



**Emma Nahayo Mugizi**, 2010 Commonwealth Scholar, at an event for Ugandan alumni in December 2014

In her closing remarks, Ros called upon alumni to apply for Commonwealth Fellowships to implement their research, as well as fellowships in countries other than the UK. The discussion was followed by a reception where alumni had the opportunity to meet with the panellists.

In December 2014, alumni met to discuss creating an active alumni association. Arthur Bright Niwagaba (2012 Commonwealth Scholar, MSc Computer Forensics and System Security, University of Greenwich) was appointed Interim Coordinator of the Uganda Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows Alumni Association (UCSFAA). The association aims to facilitate the exchange of expertise and provide a way for alumni to give back to society, through mentoring prospective Commonwealth Scholars. The meeting also included a keynote speech by David Mpanga, a prominent Ugandan barrister, who challenged alumni to use the association as a forum through which they can become accountable to each other on their professional development, and contribute to their communities and country.

## ZAMBIA

Alumni met to discuss the formation of an alumni association at a dinner in Lusaka in December 2014. Sean Melbourne, British Deputy High Commissioner to Zambia, gave a keynote speech in which he urged alumni to continue acting as ambassadors for the Commonwealth Scholarship scheme by demonstrating the impact of their scholarship on their personal and professional lives, and encouraged alumni to retain close links with the UK and support the creation of an alumni association. Lawrence Mwenge (2009 Commonwealth Distance Learning Scholar, MSc Public Health, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine), Interim Coordinator of the association, provided an update on progress and planned activities.



# OUR IMPACT

*Matt Mawer provides some thoughts on alumni trajectories and impact, following the recent publication of an interim analysis report.*

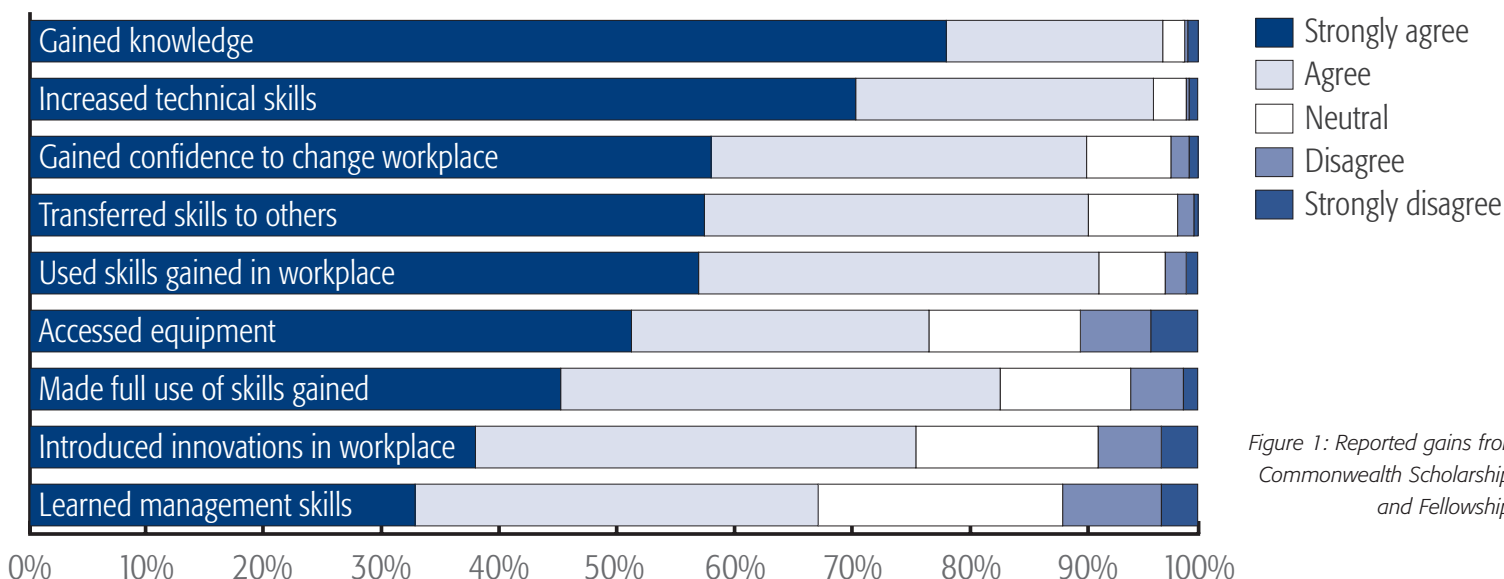


Figure 1: Reported gains from Commonwealth Scholarships and Fellowships

Since 2012, the CSC Evaluation team has been conducting a cycle of surveys designed to generate insight into the experiences, achievements, and difficulties of our alumni. Over 1,200 surveys have been returned thus far – from all across the Commonwealth and even from Scholars who studied as far back as 1962! A detailed analysis will be published in 2015, but in the meantime we would like to share some of the interim findings.

## HOW HAVE THE CAREERS OF COMMONWEALTH SCHOLARS AND FELLOWS DEVELOPED?

Almost all alumni are currently working full-time, with about three-quarters employed in higher education or the public sector. Many returned to their previous employer after completing their scholarship, but this varied depending on the type of award they held. Some alumni moved employment almost immediately, while others remained for many years. In future evaluation work we intend to explore the 'early career' period, as this can be critical for realising the benefits of scholarships.

Alumni overwhelmingly thought that gains from Commonwealth Scholarships and Fellowships were both substantial and continued to be applicable in their work – particularly technical skills and knowledge. The least readily identified gains were in management skills – arguably more applicable to some forms of scholarship or fellowship than others – and introducing innovations in the workplace. The latter highlights some of the difficulties that alumni can often face post-award, such as building support from colleagues for new working practices and, in some cases, finding facilities to continue work begun in the UK.

## IS THEIR WORK MAKING A DIFFERENCE TO INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT?

The survey results show encouraging engagement with development activities. Around 79% of alumni have been involved in projects on environmental issues, education, gender equality, health, economy, governance, population growth, or poverty reduction. 67% reported impact in socioeconomic activity and 35% impact in government policy within one or more of those fields. Alumni were also generally involved in policy and practice beyond their immediate organisations, in many cases at national and international levels. Alumni were most active in education, often through the promotion of teaching and learning and dissemination of knowledge gained while in the UK to new generations of students.

Another potentially important legacy of Commonwealth Scholarships and Fellowships is the scale of academic and scientific cooperation generated. For instance, almost 4,000 joint publications (and numerous sole-authored publications) were reported as a direct result of Commonwealth Scholarships and Fellowships, and a large minority of alumni indicated that they had also been involved in research collaborations.

## ARE COMMONWEALTH SCHOLARSHIPS REALLY THAT IMPORTANT?

We asked our alumni to reflect on whether they would have been able to undertake a similar course of study without having received a Commonwealth Scholarship or Fellowship. Of three possible scenarios – studying in the UK, in their home country, or in another country – alumni generally rated the likelihood of undertaking these courses

as very low. In particular, having been able to study in the UK was considered most improbable. Of the three scenarios presented, study in a country other than the UK was viewed as the most probable, particularly by those with nearby higher education hubs (e.g. Canadians); although alternative routes to study abroad were considered unlikely even by this group.

As our alumni are often best placed to understand their life circumstances, we have found this data a helpful indication that Commonwealth Scholarships and Fellowships are helping to fund access to higher education and professional mobility that would otherwise not have been possible.

## WHAT NEXT?

As this survey cycle draws to a close, we are offered the opportunity to reflect on both what we have learned and how we will use our experiences to continue improving the CSC's Evaluation programme from 2015 onwards. Each year, our approach to understanding the experiences and trajectories of our alumni becomes more sensitive to the subtleties of analysing real lives and better able to inform CSC policy. Our work depends on the generosity of alumni in giving their time to complete surveys, participate in interviews, and keep the CSC informed about their careers. We have not been disappointed by that generosity, and we hope that by continuing to show how your time can help shape the future of Commonwealth Scholarships, we can continue to rely upon it in the future.

Read the full interim analysis report at [bit.ly/cscuk-evaluation-interim](http://bit.ly/cscuk-evaluation-interim)

# PROFILE: IMPACT IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

## Sushita developed an understanding of distance education's role in tackling issues related to gender equality, poverty reduction, health, and the environment.

**D**r Sushita Gokool-Ramdoo was awarded a Commonwealth Scholarship in 1997 and studied MA Education and International Development at the UCL Institute of Education. At the time of her award, Sushita was a Lecturer at the Mauritius College of the Air and part of a team working on the establishment of a distance education system for the country, an initiative supported by the African Development Bank. She was motivated to apply for a Commonwealth Scholarship to expand her understanding of distance learning theory, research, and practice in order to contribute to the distance education agenda in Mauritius.

A key outcome from Sushita's Commonwealth Scholarship was that she gained an insight into the application of distance education in international development. She developed an understanding of distance education's role in tackling issues related to gender equality, poverty reduction, health, and the environment, and modules on women, education, and adult learning in developing countries expanded her perspective on the applications of distance education for sustainable development.

Sushita also gained invaluable knowledge from fellow students who had experience of working at organisations including the UK Department for International Development, World Bank, and Japan International Cooperation Agency. Her interactions with her course mates highlighted issues related to, for example, donor agencies, securing funding, and writing project proposals.

The expertise that Sushita developed broadened the scope of her interventions after her return to work,

while the research findings from her dissertation were used to adapt the Indira Gandhi National Open University certificate course on Empowering Women through Self-Help Groups for the Mauritian context.

Sushita currently works at the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) in Mauritius, and leads on the distance education regulatory function as well as national and institutional policy development. She developed the TEC's distance education policy, which provides practical guidelines for institutional policy development and has led to an improved understanding of the scope of distance education. Sushita expects that this move away from a policy deficit will contribute to systemic and coordinated distance education practice nationally, and lead to improved effectiveness and efficiency of resource utilisation. The policy was welcomed by the South African Development Community (SADC) Centre for Distance Education as a first for the SADC region.

Sushita's current focus is largely on the development of distance education regulation, including an open educational resources policy and platform and an academic credit accumulation and transfer system for Mauritius. In addition, she is responsible for the management of the TEC's Distance Education Coordination Committee, which comprises 19 organisations nationally, including ministries, universities, and other institutions engaged in formal and non-formal aspects of distance education.

Through this channel, she is working on quality assurance mechanisms for programmes delivered through distance education approaches.

Sushita also has considerable experience in providing technical assistance to governmental and international organisations, including the Association for the Development of Education in Africa, UNESCO, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Indian Ocean Commission, and Commonwealth of Learning. She sees her international role, which is focused on distance education for international development, as an opportunity to fully utilise her knowledge from her MA.

Additionally, Sushita was an Adviser to the Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development on issues related to environment education policy, and provided technical assistance to a consultancy firm engaged in the formulation of a sustainable development framework for the Prime Minister's Office. In November 2013, she was awarded the Woman Leader Award for Distance Education in Africa, as part of the African Women Leadership Awards.

Reflecting on her Commonwealth Scholarship and the outcomes from her time in the UK, Sushita emphasised the positive impact that the scholarship had on her career progression. She noted that her expertise in the distance education field can be attributed to her scholarship, and that her career was boosted by her exposure at the Institute of Education and the contacts that she made while in the UK.



## 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 eight 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
- Medical Fellowships for medical and dental staff to enhance their clinical skills

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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