



COMMONWEALTH
SCHOLARSHIPS

COMMONWEALTH LEADERS MAGAZINE



Celebrating
65 years of
Commonwealth
Scholarships

65 years of Commonwealth Scholarships

A special anniversary edition
celebrating the impact and legacy
of Commonwealth Scholarships.

ISSUE #17
SEPTEMBER 24

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The first word

This year, the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK (CSC) celebrates its 65th anniversary. As Chair of the CSC, I am very pleased to introduce this anniversary issue of Common Knowledge, which celebrates the achievements of Commonwealth Scholars over the decades and reflects on the legacy of the CSC's work.



The idea behind Commonwealth Scholarships was a simple one: to promote global understanding and cooperation through international study. The impact of that idea has gone far beyond what anyone present at that first meeting of the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP) in 1959 could have hoped for.

Since the first cohort of Commonwealth Scholars arrived in the UK in 1960, the CSC has funded over 31,000 individuals from across the Commonwealth to study at a UK university. Through this support, Commonwealth Scholars enhance their skills, acquire new knowledge, and build lasting networks for the future, enabling them to make a significant contribution to their countries and communities. From science and healthcare to education, business, and everything in between, Commonwealth Scholars play an influential role in all aspects of life, working tirelessly to bring about a more sustainable and equal world for all.

This issue of Common Knowledge focuses on some of the many stories of impact and leadership by Commonwealth Scholars that have characterised the last six and half decades of the CSC. You can read about the work of Sankar Kumar Pal (1979 Commonwealth Scholar) in the then-emerging field of fuzzy logic, which has given birth to a range of contemporary applications including artificial intelligence and aerospace engineering. You can also find out about the challenges and rewards of working on the frontlines of climate mainstreaming as part of the World Bank Group Young Professionals Program which Gordon Brown (2016 Commonwealth Scholar) explains here. In addition, you can discover the importance of history in determining modern health systems, as Poonam Bala (1983 Commonwealth Scholar) uncovered in her research into colonial era health and medicine in Bengal.

Empowering Scholars to tackle the global challenges that we face is central to the aims of the CSC. To support this vision, we provide Scholars with a framework of development themes, closely aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the UK Government's strategic priorities, to help shape their studies and research towards what will come after. We hope you will enjoy reading about the work of Akeemat Opeyemi Ayinla (2020 Commonwealth Scholar) on zoonotic disease surveillance and prevention in West Africa. Meanwhile, Nicholla Chan (2023 Commonwealth Scholar) is working to address barriers to economic empowerment, fostering greater prosperity and innovation in the Pacific.

As we welcome the 65th cohort of Scholars this year, I am heartened by the enduring legacy of Commonwealth Scholars from across the decades. As researchers, activists, practitioners, and leaders, they have created an active global community committed to improving lives, forging cooperation, and increasing public good. I look forward to discovering more about the incredible work of Commonwealth Scholars in the decades to come, and I hope you will join me in celebrating their achievements in this anniversary year.

Professor Robin Mason
Chair, Commonwealth Scholarship Commission
in the UK (CSC)



Celebrating
65 years of
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Scholarships

Over the past 65 years, the CSC has been committed to equity, accessibility and inclusion. To this day we are continuously building on and improving our procedures to ensure we offer scholarship programmes that serve everyone, regardless of disadvantage or accessibility needs, including those from historically marginalised groups. The CSC is dedicated to this work and endeavours to ensure our commitment to widening access and participation is present in all that we do.

Commonwealth Scholars play a crucial role in addressing the Commonwealth's evolving challenges ranging from climate change to global health whilst creating and developing cutting-edge research, innovation, and knowledge exchange across the Commonwealth.

Our 65th anniversary year is a chance to reflect on the achievements of Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows who have made incredible contributions to their countries and communities. We are celebrating 65 years of global development impact and looking forward to more decades of transformative contributions across the modern Commonwealth.

Help us celebrate 65 years of the CSC throughout 2024 by sharing your Commonwealth Scholarship or Fellowship story across our social media channels.



@commschols
#CommonwealthChangeLeaders
#CSC65



1959

1959
Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan established at the first Commonwealth education conference.



1986

1986
Shared Scholarships established in partnership with UK universities.



2000

2000
The first issue of the newsletter Omnes is circulated to alumni and CSC stakeholders featuring news from the CSC community.



2015

First issue of *Common Knowledge*, the CSC's magazine for the Commonwealth Scholarships Community, is published, replacing *Commonwealth Scholarships News*.
Medical Fellowships introduced.



2019

60th anniversary of the CSC.
Launched the online training course 'Understanding Development Impact' on FutureLearn.



2020

1960
The first Commonwealth Scholars take up their awards.

1969
Commonwealth Fellowships introduced.

1990
Over 10,000 scholarships and fellowships awarded by this year.

1998
Split-site Scholarships introduced in partnership with Commonwealth universities in Scholars' home countries.

2001
Professional Fellowships launched in partnership with UK host organisations.

2002
Distance Learning Scholarships introduced.

2006
The first issue of *Commonwealth Scholarships News* magazine is published.

2012-15
Over 2,000 alumni are surveyed for the CSC's evaluation work.

2017
The first Commonwealth Rutherford Fellowships are awarded across 13 countries and a range of subject areas including medicine, materials science, electronic and electrical engineering, geology, and social work.

2018
All Department for International Development (now Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office) Commonwealth Scholarships offered under six CSC developmental themes.

2020
Over 30,000 scholarships awarded by 2020.

Developed a full programme of online workshops for the first time.

2021
Launched the 'Leaders for Sustainable Development' training programme for Scholars.

2023
Hosted the first joint Farewell Event for scholars studying on FCDO-funded scholarship programmes- Chevening, Commonwealth and Marshall Scholarships.

1960s

The evolution of tort law: Reflections on a 65-year career



Harold Luntz
1960 Commonwealth Scholar
South Africa
BCL Law
University of Oxford



Harold Luntz is an influential legal scholar who has shaped tort law and motor accident schemes in Australia.

My work and research over the last 65 years has been in tort law. A tort is a civil wrong that causes a claimant to suffer loss or harm, with legal liability resting with the person who has committed the tortious act.

I have not been able to shake the fascination that cases on tort has always held for me. Every tort case is a little history. They involve people and what's happened to them - if they've got hurt in some way or suffered a loss of some sort. And the question is whether the law provides them with a remedy. The claimant is making a claim because he or she has suffered some loss, and wants it put right. The question is whether the law recognises their claim.

Revolutionising motor accident schemes in Victoria

Developing the motor accident scheme in Victoria has been one of my biggest contributions to tort law and in improving protections afforded to claimants. Through my advocacy for legal reform and research, Victoria now has one of the most advanced motor accident schemes in Australia.

My contributions have included the implementation of a no-fault motor accident scheme and the introduction of new systems for catastrophic injuries. Through work with the Chief Justices Law Reform Committee in Victoria, I have also contributed to changes to the law of succession after the death of an injured person and the payment of benefits and damages.

Extending beyond the state of Victoria, I have successfully advocated for each state and territory to implement its own no-fault motor accident scheme for catastrophic injuries.

Not all my advocacy has been successful, however, and to this day I continue to argue for modifications in the law to protect people whose lives are changed simply by chance.

‘Developing the motor accident scheme in Victoria has been one of my biggest contributions to torts law and in improving protections afforded to claimants. Through my advocacy for legal reform and research, Victoria now has one of the most advanced motor accident schemes in Australia.’

The challenge of introducing 'no fault compensation'

The one failure I've had is in arguing for the introduction of a comprehensive accident compensation system, No Fault Compensation. This accident compensation system would cover anybody who is injured in any way, at work, at home, during recreation, or in a motor vehicle accident.

New Zealand introduced a comprehensive compensation system in 1974, which prompted a similar committee of inquiry in Australia. I was co-opted by the Senate to comment on the bill which resulted from the committee of inquiry and to write a report. I had previously written a short book which argued for its adoption. Despite the success in gathering evidence through the inquiry and the drafting of a more limited bill, as well as the support of the Prime Minister, it was not enacted because the Government was dismissed by the Governor-General and lost the general election which followed.

Whereas my research and advocacy for more comprehensive cover for motor accidents has resulted in change, seeking compensation for work-related injuries and non-work injuries which may affect someone's ability to work, has faced significant challenges. These include barriers from unions and the lack of political will to overhaul existing systems to better protect people.

All these years later, we're no nearer to achieving it and I've been arguing since 1974.



Oxford and the Commonwealth Scholarship

I was very lucky to be able to complete the Bachelor of Civil Law (BCL) with First Class Honours at the University of Oxford, something that I wouldn't have been able to do without the Commonwealth Scholarship. The BCL is regarded as one of the most prestigious postgraduate degrees in law and it opened the doors to my academic position and long-term career at the University of Melbourne.

As one of the first recipients of a Commonwealth Scholarship, our cohort was welcomed to the UK by the then Prime Minister, Sir Harold Macmillan. It was wonderful to participate in the lunch held in our honour and to meet with other Commonwealth Scholars, and I still look back fondly on those meetings. It was a very welcome introduction to what the Commonwealth stood for.

A change in direction: From South Africa to Australia

When I left South Africa to go to Oxford in 1960, I intended to return as a practitioner. On completion of my studies, I returned home and took up an academic position at the University of the Witwatersrand. Following my time in the UK however, I could no longer live in South Africa under apartheid, which was how I came to take up a teaching position at the University of Melbourne.

Being an academic and researcher have been really important roles for me. My publications and research have become an essential part of the curriculum for law students and have been of assistance to the courts, legal practitioners, insurers, and others in their day-to-day work. All these achievements resulted from the grounding I received at the University of Oxford during my time as a Commonwealth Scholar.

My contributions were recognised in 2019 when I was made an Officer in the General Division of the Order of Australia 'for distinguished service to legal education, as an academic and editor, to professional development, and to the community'. I was very proud to receive the award and feel that it is recognition that I'd given back to Australia something in return for what Australia gave me.

1970s

The crucial role of digital image processing in data science



Sankar Kumar Pal
1979 Commonwealth Scholar
India
PhD Electrical Engineering
Imperial College London



Sankar Kumar Pal is a pioneering data scientist whose groundbreaking research in fuzzy logic and digital image processing has significantly advanced the fields of artificial intelligence and data science globally.

Digital image processing is crucial in data science. It is the process of analysing and interpreting digital images using computer algorithms and is fundamental to many parts of everyday life, from smartphone cameras to remote sensing and medical imaging.

When I began my research in image processing in the 1970s, it was a new field of data science and there was very little research or technology available, as electronic computers were in initial stages of development.

My early studies explored the importance of pattern recognition in interpreting data which introduced me to the concept of fuzzy logic. Fuzzy logic is based on the human ability to make decisions based on vague and imprecise (or fuzzy) data. Fuzzy techniques are mathematical models designed to recognise, interpret and use data that is imprecise. This can be applied to the processing of digital images, as well as other areas of data science, such as artificial intelligence.

Pioneering image processing at Imperial College London

In 1979, to pursue my research in image processing, I was awarded a Commonwealth Scholarship to complete a PhD in Electrical Engineering at Imperial College London (ICL). Even in 1979, this was still a new research area and very few institutions had image processing facilities, such as high-powered computers, which could process and store large images over long periods of time.

Despite choosing to study at ICL, they also did not have these facilities – however, I knew I would be best placed to complete and publish my studies there. My supervisor and faculty lecturers were very supportive and recognised the importance of my research in pioneering image processing. They established a partnership with University College London and the Philips Research Lab in Surrey to use their image processing facilities.

I completed my PhD in two years, and my thesis and subsequent publications authored by myself and my supervisor, Dr Robert A King, formed the foundation of a new area of data science, ‘fuzzy image processing’. This led to further research and the emergence of several modern data science disciplines.

At the time of my studies, we didn’t know my research would become so important. Our focus was on how to make a machine understand an image and communicate it, but now it has so many applications and has contributed to the development of artificial intelligence and data analytics.

During the 1980s and 1990s, I was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship to work at the University of California, Berkeley and University of Maryland, College Park, and a US NAS-NRC Senior Research Associateship to work as a guest investigator at the NASA Johnson Space Center, Houston, Texas. Until this time, I had no idea of the international reach or application of my research at ICL and I was surprised by the recognition.



Overcoming challenges and mentoring the next generation

I belong to a very ordinary low income family in India. At the time of applying for a Commonwealth Scholarship, it was unthinkable that I could go to the UK to study, but my brother-in-law encouraged me.

Following my scholarship, I have supported colleagues and students to pursue further studies and to apply for scholarship opportunities they may feel are not possible, using my own example. I have also had the pleasure of supervising PhD students in areas related to my research.

In addition, in 1993, I established a research group and school of machine intelligence at the Indian Statistical Institute (ISI) Kolkata to support the advancement of national research in this field. In 2004, in recognition of this work, the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India, created a centre at ISI, Calcutta to further develop this research.

As a Distinguished Chair at the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), I volunteer my time and expertise to give talks and lectures at state universities and private institutes in remote places in India. Due to their location and limited funding, students and young researchers at these institutions may not be exposed to cutting-edge technology and research on artificial intelligence and machine learning, and may not have lecturers with a background in these fields. In my role, I can help address these gaps in science education and provide advice and guidance.

A legacy of innovation in data science

I started my career in 1975 and have seen data science advance over the last 50 years. New theories and approaches have been superseded as research has advanced and our application and requirements for image processing have changed, from data mining in the early 2000s to big data in the 2010s and now artificial intelligence and deep learning.

Since 2015, I have been a Distinguished Scientist, which is a big honour awarded by the governing council of any public-funded institute. I am President of the Indian Statistical Institute (ISI) based at the ISI, Calcutta where I hold the position of National Science Chair Professor. My contributions have been recognised internationally and nationally and in 2013, I was awarded the civilian honour, Padma Shri, for most exceptional and distinguished service to science and engineering.

Without my Commonwealth Scholarship and PhD at ICL, I could not have completed my pioneering research.

‘Since 2015, I have been a Distinguished Scientist, which is a big honour awarded by the governing council of the Indian Statistical Institute, which is a publicly-funded institute. I am now the President of the Indian Statistical Institute, Calcutta where I also hold the position of National Science Chair Professor of Govt. of India. My contributions have been recognised internationally and nationally and in 2013, I was awarded one of India’s highest civilian honours, Padma Shri, for more exceptional and distinguished service to science and engineering.’

1980s

How colonial rule shaped health and medicine in India



Poonam Bala
1983 Commonwealth Scholar
India
PhD Sociology
University of Edinburgh



Poonam Bala is a distinguished scholar whose research unveiled the significant influence of British colonial policies on health and medicine in Bengal, establishing a new field of study in the socio-historical impact of imperialism on public health.

Politics and political policies have a significant impact on public health, from determining funding to provide and develop healthcare systems, to forging trade deals to access drugs and medical technology, and promoting health education.

Understanding how the political state impacts and influences public health is important in developing new policies and learning from history.

Between 1858 and 1947, the British directly ruled India, bringing new ideologies and policies across all sectors, including public health and medicine. Until the early 1980s, the impact of colonial rule and introduction of imperial policies on medicine was little known or understood.

During my postgraduate degree (MPhil) at Jawaharlal Nehru University, I wrote a detailed thesis on how the political state affected the growth of the medical profession (which included the Indian systems and western medicine) and its impact on people's health in India. My thesis charted out a detailed trajectory of this dynamic from the ancient and medieval period to the British period as well as post-independence. As there was little previous research done on this area with scant sources, I used one source text available as the starting point of my research; the author of this book soon became a favourite of mine.

I wanted to develop my research further which led me to undertake a PhD in Sociology at the University of Edinburgh through a Commonwealth Scholarship.

Focusing on Bengal

Taking my MPhil thesis and finding a focus for my doctorate was a challenge but I knew I wanted to narrow my research to a particular region/state and period in India. I settled on exploring how the British Empire affected health and medicine from 1800-1947 in Bengal. I chose Bengal as it was an administrative seat in colonial India where all imperial policies were made, making it a historically important case study.

Due to the lack of previous research in this area, my studies required me to access historical documents and archives across the UK and in India. Through my studies, I had access to the (then) India Office Library in London, the University of Edinburgh Library and the Scottish Library, and archival sources in Delhi and Bengal. Apart from completing my academic work, visiting these libraries enabled me to meet with fellow researchers and students from other universities and build a global network.

This was an enriching experience which made me aware of the significance of my PhD within the wider academic community. Although I had access to libraries and archives, it was challenging finding sources to support my studies. I knew then that my work and prospective

publications would provide access to information to researchers in the UK and India, as well as globally, on a very important part of history.

A groundbreaking publication and its legacy

The nature and intensity of research I carried out at the University of Edinburgh provided me with in-depth knowledge of a subject little known at the time. In 1991, I published my first book, *Imperial Medicine in Bengal: A Socio-Historical Perspective* (published by Sage) based on my doctoral thesis. This was the first region-specific study of medicine under the British Empire which introduced a new field of study on the dynamics of medicine and empire in history - a field which has subsequently grown exponentially. It gives me immense pleasure and a sense of pride in sharing that my first book could lend itself to be used by researchers as a framework to develop new research; over the past three decades, it has been a catalyst for similar health studies in different states and former colonised countries.

Having studied at one of the most prestigious universities in the UK, the recognition I gained as an academic enabled me to develop international collaborations with fellow researchers and other academics. My Commonwealth Scholarship provided me excellent opportunities to carve out my own path through global academic connections, which I have cherished till date.

Uncovering the intersections of Indian and Western medicine

A key outcome of my research is the importance of medical encounters between Indian and Western medicine through the British Empire and how these (re)defined and shaped the trajectory of medicine and public health in India. At that time, historical scholarship suggested that there was little in the way of comprehensive Indian medicine— however, my research has proven this was not the case. There was instead a period of medical knowledge systems colliding and phases of conflict, accommodation, acceptance, and merging of Indian and Western medicine.

An example of this includes the incorporation of indigenous plants used in Indian medicine, in the first British Pharmacopoeia titled, *Materia Medica of Hindoostan* published by Whitelaw Ainslie in 1813; several of these drugs were used by Indian practitioners. This publication pre-dates British colonial rule and shows the importance of Indian medicine in developing and shaping Western medicine in later years.

A return to India

Returning to India following my PhD seemed challenging initially as to what career trajectory I would follow. From a very young age, I had expressed interest in education and research. Whilst my return from the UK opened up opportunities to contribute to a new area of research and study in a different country, on my return to India I realised I wanted to understand more about my own culture and wanted to find out how I could give something back to my own people, community and country. My brief association with Delhi University (Delhi School of Economics) as a lecturer soon changed my initial career path to community development programmes in India.

I worked for three years as a Programme Officer in the Health and Sanitation Department for the Danish International Development Assistance (DANIDA, Royal Danish Embassy, New Delhi). In this role, I commissioned several projects in rural areas of India, supporting communities to access health, water and sanitation facilities. On completion of the programme, I decided to return to academia, but the people I met and the communities I worked with in the three years taught me a lot about rural life in India and the challenges faced by communities across different social strata. The experience I gained, thus, was very enriching and will always stay in my mind.

Reflecting on a scholarly journey

Reflecting on 65 years of the CSC, Commonwealth Scholarships for me has meant more than the financial support, which is very important, but for me, it meant carving out my own academic trajectory and building my confidence. I acquired academic visibility and recognition for my research, with a continuous quest to encourage further research which would continue to advance knowledge of history and social factors in health- the underlying thesis of my own research.

I never miss an opportunity to think of and thank my (late) parents in all of my academic achievements. And here is an apt moment to thank my parents for supporting me in all my academic endeavours. My mother, barely a week post a major surgery, waited for hours in the entrance examination hall at Jawaharlal Nehru University while I wrote the exam, faced the interview for MPhil and came out successful in both. I cannot express my gratitude enough to my mother. My parents were truly encouraging and believed in me at a time when sending daughters abroad was a rare priority for parents. The Commonwealth Scholarship enabled me to surmount all these difficulties and challenges, and I could attain what I wanted to.

2000s

The critical role of the Southern Ocean in combating climate change



Sandy Thomalla
2001 Commonwealth Split-site Scholar
South Africa
PhD Oceanography
University of Southampton and
the University of Cape Town



Sandy Thomalla is a Chief Researcher at the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and leads South Africa's flagship ocean-climate research program. Here she reflects on her journey from PhD student to a leading figure in oceanography, detailing her research on the Southern Ocean and its impact on climate change.

I am a Chief Researcher at the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) within the Smart Places Cluster. The CSIR is a leading scientific and technology research organisation that researches, develops, localises and diffuses technologies to accelerate socioeconomic prosperity in South Africa.

A Chief Researcher is the top tier of the CSIR's Research Career Ladder and is awarded to specialists whose sustained track record in research and development has led to an international profile and international recognition as leaders in their fields of expertise.

Advancing ocean-climate research in South Africa
In 2021, I was appointed as the Research Group Leader of the Southern Ocean Carbon-Climate Observatory (SOCCO), where I spearhead South Africa's flagship ocean-climate research program. SOCCO's Science and Innovation Strategy addresses the international priority of understanding the global impact of Southern Ocean carbon-climate dynamics.

The Southern Ocean plays a disproportionate role when it comes to buffering the impacts of climate change. Although it only represents approximately 30% of the world's oceans, it is the world's largest heat and carbon sink. The Southern Ocean, which surrounds Antarctica, takes up 50% of the global oceanic uptake of carbon and 75% of the excess heat generated by the anthropogenic carbon that remains in the atmosphere. This is primarily due to cold temperatures and patterns of water circulation. In addition, ocean carbon uptake is facilitated by microscopic marine plants called phytoplankton which fix CO₂ when they photosynthesise and remove carbon when they die and sink to the ocean's interior.

Understanding both the importance of this ocean in protecting us from more rapid impacts of climate change and how climate change and human actions are impacting the Southern Ocean's future ability to absorb CO₂ and heat are critical.



Researching the climate sensitivities of the Southern Ocean

My research at SOCCO takes a multidisciplinary approach to addressing the complex challenge of understanding the climate sensitivities of the Southern Ocean biological carbon pump to improve climate projections. These projections can support decision makers in anticipating and planning for the challenges and associated impacts of climate change.

Phytoplankton can be found anywhere in the ocean and are fundamentally similar. They obtain their energy through photosynthesis and are sensitive to climate variations that impact their nutrient and light supply. They have developed ecologically different ways to deal with factors such as cold, light and nutrients to adapt to their geographic location.

Climate change is likely to affect the composition, abundance and rates of phytoplankton primary production in the Southern Ocean, which threatens the ecosystem services they provide, including sustaining biodiversity, fuelling the food web, and mediating global climate.

Through the data we are collecting and analysing on phytoplankton in the Southern Ocean, we can understand the unique characteristics of Southern

Ocean phytoplankton. This information can be used to more accurately set parameters within our earth system models that better reflect the unique conditions of the Southern Ocean and in doing so, improve predictions of future climate.

From humble beginnings to international recognition

SOCCO was initiated in 2010 in response to the South African government's recognition of the importance of climate change in its 10-year strategic initiatives. At that time, I was a postdoctoral researcher, fresh out of my PhD, and the group was comprised of only three people. My predecessor Prof. Pedro Monteiro, the brainchild of SOCCO, one PhD student and myself as a postdoc. Since then, we have grown substantially and now employ eight staff members and currently support 20 post graduate students.

I've witnessed SOCCO's evolution alongside my own career progression, growing from a postdoctoral researcher to a Junior Researcher, Senior Researcher, and now Chief Researcher. It's been an amazing experience because I've been involved from the get-go. As a small research group in South Africa, we needed to have a research niche that would allow us to compete with big international research groups in Europe and America.

SOCCO's niche hypothesis was that the influence of the Southern Ocean in global climate would be mediated by the physical and biological characteristics of the seasonal cycle. Addressing this hypothesis required long-term investment in high-resolution models, integrated physical-biogeochemical observations and capacity building of a new generation of South African ocean-climate-ecosystem scientists.

SOCCO is now considered a flagship programme that has facilitated the setup of 6 world class technological research facilities to address multidisciplinary science objectives while concurrently providing advanced platforms for training in both scientific and technological research innovation. We have now produced over 120 publications, 100 science and engineering students, and fostered expertise in innovation centred around observations, modelling, machine learning and sensor development. All of these remain key to the modus operandi of SOCCO as it continues on its mission to reduce uncertainties in key processes of the Southern Ocean towards strengthening confidence in climate projections from Earth System Models.

Raising the visibility of SOCCO and the research we've published over the last 14 years is an important part of this. Alongside generating great science, we have delivered TED talks and media coverage, and present at conferences to connect with researchers across the international community.

During my Commonwealth Scholarship at the University of Southampton, I didn't realise how important the relationships you build with your peers can be in generating longer-term connections. Whilst completing my PhD, I jumped at opportunities to join research cruises because they generated exposure and experience. These proved to also be valuable opportunities to get to know senior researchers and PhD peers and the relationships that were fostered on these research expeditions continue to form an important network that I rely on to this day.

Addressing the urgent need to remove CO₂ from our atmosphere

It's starting to become apparent that we've crossed the 1.5°C threshold of warming which implies that we must remove CO₂ from our atmosphere to bring us down to what's considered safe levels. This cannot be achieved without both deep and sustained cuts in emissions in the first half of the century and negative emissions in the second half of the century. Negative emissions are only

possible through carbon dioxide removal (CDR), which is a group of processes in which CO₂ is actively removed from the atmosphere and sequestered for long periods of time. This has spurred a lot of investment in technologies to remove CO₂ from the ocean. The scale at which CDR is required brings enormous technological R&D and innovation developmental opportunities but they also bring risks that require strong governance to minimise social, ecological and financial costs.

There's a fine line between recognising the need for these solutions but understanding the potential risks. This is where the importance of marrying local knowledge, such as SOCCO, and goodwill for solving a problem, can have an effective outcome. SOCCO has recognised a gap in South Africa's ability to support robust assessment of the opportunities and risks of CDR strategies in general and in the ocean in particular. In response, SOCCO has expanded the scope of its Phase IV strategy to develop a new national science and technology capability to support policy through observations and modelling based assessment capabilities in ocean CDR. This will involve the expansion of SOCCO's carbon-climate science expertise in high resolution modelling and observations from the Southern Ocean to incorporate the South African coastline.

'Raising the visibility of SOCCO and the research we've published over the last 14 years is an important part of this. Alongside generating great science, we have delivered TED talks, secured media coverage, and presented at conferences to connect with researchers across the international community.'

Current Commonwealth Scholars funded by the Department for Education

Over the past 65 years, the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission has been funded by a variety of Government departments; while the majority of funding comes from the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, the CSC has also received funding from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Department for Education (DfE).

Featured here are two Commonwealth Scholars whose recent studies have been funded by the DfE in conjunction with UK universities. These PhD Scholarships are open to applicants from high income countries and aim to support world-class research and help sustain international recognition of the UK higher education system for the benefit of wider society.

Name: Thomas Bunting
Award: High Income PhD Commonwealth Scholarship
Country: Australia
Programme: Geography
University: University of Cambridge
PhD working title: Managing climate-related risks in agriculture supply chains with nature-based solutions



Tom's research explores the emerging role of financial markets in environmental governance, particularly in the context of agricultural frontiers. The expansion of industrial agriculture poses a significant threat to global biodiversity and essential ecosystem services. Recognising the capital-intensive nature of agriculture, financial markets have been identified as crucial leverage points for promoting change, as highlighted in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

Policymakers have emphasised the need to scale up private investment in nature conservation through green financial mechanisms. However, the influence of financial markets on environmental change, and their potential to counteract biodiversity loss, remains underexplored. Focusing on Brazil, Tom's PhD investigates how financial actors and their mechanisms might reverse biodiversity loss in agricultural frontiers. His research integrates development indicators, remote sensing data, and farm-level information to assess the impact of financialisation on conservation and development outcomes in Brazil's MATOPIBA region.

Name: Masha (Maria) Novoselova
Award: High Income PhD Commonwealth Scholarship
Country: Canada
Programme: Clinical Neurosciences
University: University of Cambridge
PhD working title: Human ultra-high field (7T) deuterium metabolic imaging



Maria's research centres on Deuterium Metabolic Imaging (DMI), an advanced magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) technique that examines brain metabolism. Participants ingest a tracer with specific hydrogen atoms replaced by deuterium, a stable hydrogen isotope. Using non-invasive 7T deuterium MRI scans, her team tracks how the tracer is absorbed and metabolised in the brain.

The primary objective is to validate the clinical importance of 7T DMI by exploring metabolic variations in glioblastoma patients, measuring energy uptake in individuals with Alzheimer's-related Mild Cognitive Impairment, and improving scanning protocols and analytical methods. Ultimately, Maria aims to develop 7T DMI into a reliable clinical tool for personalised medicine, enhancing patient outcomes through tailored metabolic insights.



Improving diabetes care through global health education



Magdalina Jean-Louis
2013 Commonwealth Professional Fellow
St Lucia
St Lucia Diabetes Project



Magdalina Jean-Louis has advanced diabetes care in St Lucia and the Caribbean through her commitment to health education and management, strengthened by her Commonwealth Professional Fellowship.

Diabetes is a condition that causes a person's blood sugar level to become too high. Untreated, elevated levels of blood sugar can cause damage to the heart, blood vessels, eyes, kidneys, and nerves. Approximately 422 million people worldwide have diabetes, the majority of whom live in low and middle income countries. Globally, 1.5 million deaths are attributed to diabetes each year and the prevalence of diabetes is steadily increasing.

In 2019, diabetes was the fourth leading cause of death and disability in the Americas. According to the International Diabetes Federation (IDF) Diabetes Atlas, North America and the Caribbean had the fourth highest age-adjusted prevalence of diabetes in the world of 11.1% in adults between 20-79 years of age.

There are two types of diabetes, the most common being type 2 diabetes which occurs when the body becomes resistant to insulin or doesn't make enough insulin. Type 1 diabetes is a chronic condition in which the pancreas produces little or no insulin by itself. Type 1 diabetes cannot currently be prevented, making early diagnosis and interventions, such as medical and lifestyle changes, critical to preventing complications and wider health problems.

Addressing gaps in diabetes care in St Lucia

As a nurse midwife and health educator, I am committed to serving communities through comprehensive health education, management, and lifestyle consultations to treat non-communicable diseases (NCDs), such as diabetes. As well as supporting patients in St Lucia, my role extends to representing the British Virgin Islands Health Services Authority (BVI HSA), where I advocate for informed health choices and practices.

My passion and zeal for health education led to me being recommended to undertake a Commonwealth Professional Fellowship with the St Lucia Diabetes Project in 2013.

Prior to my Fellowship, St Lucia's approach to diabetes prevention and management was inadequate. There were no structured educational programmes for newly diagnosed diabetics or widespread screening initiatives and tests to support early diagnosis were not offered through healthcare facilities. Additionally, annual eye screenings were not conducted and support services, such as counselling, were not available.

As such, the opportunity to advance my academic and practical skills in diabetes care through the Fellowship stands as a pinnacle in my career.

Learning from the UK's NHS approach

During my Fellowship, I was introduced to structured health education approaches used by the UK's National Health Service (NHS), most notably the Diabetes Education and Self Management for Ongoing and Newly Diagnosed (DESMOND) programme, which seeks to design, deliver and embed evidence-based education for people with or at risk of type 2 diabetes.

Diabetes is a multi-faceted condition that involves your social and physical life. It's not enough to diagnose someone and advise them to take their medication, exercise, eat well, and drink water. This was the general approach in St Lucia in 2013.

Through my Fellowship and exposure to the DESMOND programme, on my return to St Lucia in 2014, I introduced a new diabetes structured education programme. The programme highlights the importance of an individualised approach to patient care and how a patient's lifestyle may impact their diabetes. For example, factors such as stress can cause a rise in blood sugar levels. Knowing a patient's exposure and response to stress can then be addressed in their tailored treatment plan and approach to manage diabetes.

The programme was well received by Community Nurse Managers in St Lucia and I'm pleased to share it has since been adapted for broader application across the Caribbean. Whilst there are still some challenges to wider uptake across the Caribbean region, my programme has attracted interest from health agencies looking to improve diabetes prevention and treatment.

Advancing academic and research pursuits

My fellowship also provided a gateway to complete specialised training at King's College London, which subsequently led to me completing a Master's funded by the Foundation of European Nurses in Diabetes (FEND) and a doctorate in Health Education, with a particular focus on NCDs.

At this point, I had already been practising as a registered nurse for 20 years and further studies provided an opportunity to merge the academic and research side of nursing and health education with the realities of applying this in a healthcare setting.



My research on the awareness of Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice (KAP) regarding insulinemia/insulin resistance and its correlation with NCDs in St Lucia has been a cornerstone of my success. This work received international recognition at the IDF Congress in December 2023 and continues to feature in various media outlets.

Reflecting on the Commonwealth Professional Fellowship

I always believe that no matter your academic ability, nursing starts at the bedside. I'm fortunate that my work has continued to enable me to meet and treat patients one-on-one and provide health education to communities.

Reflecting on my career and achievements to date, my Commonwealth Professional Fellowship means the world to me. The Fellowship has been instrumental in my endeavours to promote healthy lifestyles, guiding individuals towards improved well-being through comprehensive lifestyle interventions.

'Through my Fellowship and exposure to the DESMOND programme, I introduced a new structured diabetes education programme in St Lucia, highlighting the importance of an individualised approach to patient care and managing diabetes.'

From local water infrastructure to global development and climate action



Gordon Brown
2016 Commonwealth Scholar
Jamaica
MSc Environmental Engineering
Imperial College London



Gordon Brown is a Civil & Environmental Engineer whose Commonwealth Scholarship propelled him from managing water infrastructure projects in Jamaica to tackling global development and climate challenges at the World Bank, significantly broadening his impact and expertise.

The World Bank Group's Young Professionals Programme (WBG YPP) is a 2-year programme that offers young professionals from around the world a unique opportunity to work on the frontlines of international development and to develop leadership skills. A key element of the WBG YPP is the use of rotational assignments to deepen knowledge and experience gained.

I joined the WBG as a Young Professional in 2023 at their headquarters in Washington D.C., with my first rotation being with the Climate Change Group (CCG). Here I was afforded the opportunity to contribute to various aspects of the WBG's Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP) and the CCG's objective of mainstreaming climate into the World Bank's operations. My work programme centred on the Climate Support Facility (CSF); a multi-donor trust fund focused on aiding countries to fast-forward climate action. I also worked on aligning the World Bank's financing flows with the low-carbon, climate resilient goals of the Paris Agreement, and contributed to cutting edge climate and development analytics. I'm fortunate to be working on such a critical and cross-cutting global challenge such as climate change.

Taking up this position in such a large global organisation has led to a huge learning curve. Learning how the Bank operates will take some time and I look forward to rotational assignments to aid with this process.

I have always taken an interest in the development impact of multilateral organisations and previously interned at the European Investment Bank's (EIB) headquarters in Luxembourg. The EIB is the lending arm of the European Union and is one of the world's largest multilateral financial institutions. This was a valuable experience, however having embarked on this internship immediately after completing my bachelor's degree in 2012, I personally desired to return home to obtain professional engineering experience.

Early career and building expertise at ICL

Following this EIB internship and prior to taking up the Commonwealth Scholarship in 2016, I was a Design Engineer at Fluid Systems Engineering Limited (FSEL), a water engineering consultancy, in Jamaica. In this position I was responsible for aiding engineering design and construction supervision of water infrastructure projects, with a specific focus on wastewater treatment plants.

My boss was an incredible mentor during my time at FSEL and both inspired and encouraged me to apply for a Master's degree at his alma mater, Imperial College London (ICL). This was borne out of the need for me to build on my civil engineering background by deepening my skills and knowledge in environmental engineering.

ICL is a world class institution and my Master's course provided me with practical modules and training which enabled me to learn and work under pressure. As an immediate result of my studies, I felt more confident to speak to senior engineers and project stakeholders as a subject expert. Even if I did not have an immediate solution, I had increased confidence in my ability to methodically approach and solve complex challenges.

Returning to Jamaica and leading significant projects

Prior to my Master's degree, I had been working on the preliminary stages of Phase 1 of a multimillion-dollar project to rehabilitate and upgrade a municipal wastewater treatment plant located in Greater Portmore, Jamaica. I knew I would return to this work, but I did not expect the scale of the work and the accountability levels I would be shouldering.

I was promoted to Senior Design Engineer at FSEL immediately upon my return from the UK and my responsibilities on the project expanded accordingly. My new role required me to take more project ownership and work more closely with a wider range of stakeholders and teams involved in day-to-day construction delivery. As the youngest lead on the project, it was important that I demonstrated my expertise to gain the trust of various stakeholders. I found my international exposure, advanced degree training, and continued willingness to listen to and learn from others helped to ease concerns and increase confidence.

The project was not without its challenges. There were meticulous procedure and due diligence requirements to ensure proper fiduciary management of public funds. Technical challenges were posed due to incomplete background data and the need for phased rehabilitation as the plant was required to stay in operation at all times. The pandemic also added an unexpected twist to project management.

It was an incredible project to be part of. The upgrade subsequently improved both public and environmental health, benefiting approximately 80,000 residents in the area. Post-completion, the project was recognised by the

Jamaica Institution of Engineers via a nomination for Best Engineering Project of the Year 2022.

The technical depth and international diplomacy skills gained during the Commonwealth Scholarship have been invaluable both in this prior role and in my current role at the WBG. Personally, I feel my Master's degree accelerated my career by 3-5 years.

Mentoring and giving back

Mentoring has played an important role in my personal and professional development to date and it's something I'm passionate about. Since completing my studies, I have delivered guest lectures to first year civil engineering students at the University of the West Indies Mona campus on the basics of environmental engineering. I have also had the opportunity to present on my work in national and regional forums.

Being a Commonwealth Scholar has opened the door for me to personally mentor lots of young students and professionals as they navigate different study and work challenges. I have been a beneficiary of great mentorship and see a great need to pay it forward, especially with respect to Caribbean nationals as relatively lower regional education attainment rates present a hurdle to accessing globally competitive opportunities. Recently, life came full circle whereby a mentee was awarded the Commonwealth Scholarship to pursue the same Master's of Environmental Engineering course at ICL. These outcomes bring me great joy. I eagerly look forward to this mentee's development throughout the programme and will encourage them to actively pay it forward.

Future aspirations and reflections

Reflecting on my career and future plans, I look forward to getting increased exposure to the depth and breadth of the WBG's work and to settle into the institution post-completion of the YPP. I'm also looking forward to building my leadership and diplomacy through Bank operations, thus contributing to my ultimate goal of improving conditions for both people and the planet.

As a small island native, I grew up watching news on the Conference of the Parties (COP), the Paris Agreement, and the work of multilateral organisations such as the WBG. It therefore feels surreal to now be on the inside, helping to deliver development impact in over 100 beneficiary countries. My Commonwealth Scholarship experience has inspired me to further effect development impact and has reinforced my desire for constant self-development towards achieving this goal.

2010s

2020s

The future of sustainable energy and its impact on local communities



Hamid Abdalla Hamid
 2019 and 2023 Commonwealth Scholar
 Zanzibar, Tanzania
 MSc Petroleum Data Management
 University of Aberdeen
 PhD Sustainability of Energy,
 Oil and Gas, Coventry University



Hamid Abdalla Hamid is an assistant manager at the Zanzibar Petroleum Development Company, focusing on the sustainable management of oil and gas resources and the impact on host communities.

Globally, the demand for energy is high and is predicted to rise, making investment in energy sources critical. The energy sector, however, is one of the biggest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs), producing approximately three-quarters of the world's emissions. Replacing these polluting sources of energy with renewable energy would dramatically decrease emissions and support targets to reach net zero by 2050.

Reducing reliance on non-renewable energy sources is critical alongside ensuring where these sources are in operation, their environmental and social impact is also reduced.

Addressing the environmental and social impact of oil and gas

I am an assistant manager at the Zanzibar Petroleum Development Company, which is the national oil company for Zanzibar, a Tanzanian archipelago off the coast of East Africa. In 2015, Zanzibar was given the right to handle its oil and gas reserves, these having previously been managed by Tanzania since 1964.

As such, the oil and gas sector in Zanzibar is relatively new and is at an important stage in its development to contribute to its economic growth and provide local employment opportunities.

Through my early exposure to the sector, I realised that to better contribute to its development in Zanzibar and ensure that operations were managed responsibly and sustainably, I needed to gain specialised technical knowledge and skills. This led to me undertaking my Master's in Petroleum Data Management at the University of Aberdeen in 2019.

As well as improving my knowledge on the management of oil and gas resources, I also wanted to address the destructive impact of the sector, particularly on host communities. Communities living near to oil and gas sites experience many of the negative effects of the sector. This includes environmental damage, pollution, loss of land, and loss of livelihoods, with little consideration or compensation provided.



My current PhD explores this further and is focused on the impact of the oil and gas sector from the perspective of the host communities. It seeks to understand the full impact of the sector on local communities, their needs and expectations of companies performing drilling, and what corporate social responsibility (CSR) should look like in the oil and gas sector in Zanzibar.

Understanding the impact on host communities

Drilling is typically undertaken by external companies with contracts negotiated at the government level. Host communities are not considered in these negotiations or invited to consultations to understand the projects and raise their concerns. Across the world, we see companies drilling and extracting resources and then moving on, leaving host communities and the destruction and disruption caused by operations.

There has been little research into the impact of the oil and gas sector on host communities and I'm excited to be leading on this. As someone from a host community, we must be considered and included in these negotiations.

My studies have introduced me to a range of different ethical and CSR considerations, as well as private sector demands and processes. Studying in the UK has also provided important exposure to wider discussions and research on the energy sector. Coming from a small country with a new oil and gas sector, there is little information and understanding about the drive to

net zero and transition to renewable energy and how other countries are taxing oil and gas. Through my Commonwealth Scholarships, I can hear what the world is saying about oil and gas and use this to advise on changes to our operations.

Contributing to innovative research

During my current studies, I've also been able to contribute to the European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST) which is a funding organisation for research and innovation networks. I'm the vice leader of working group 4 (WG4) on the Offshore Fresh and Groundwater project which is exploring freshwater drilling in the sea to provide freshwater in countries suffering from drought. This group has led me to form connections with researchers across Europe who are also providing insights to support my PhD.

The oil and gas industry is very sensitive and the global and geopolitical attention on it is huge. Having qualified people working in the sector in Zanzibar is therefore critical to ensure that processes and safeguards are observed and that any drilling is sustainably and responsibly managed as far as possible.

This is an amazing opportunity that has come from my Commonwealth Scholarships and studying in the UK.

'Coming from a small country with a new oil and gas sector, there is little information and understanding about the drive to net zero and transition to renewable energy and how other countries are taxing oil and gas. Through my Commonwealth Scholarships, I can hear what the world is saying about oil and gas and use this to advise on changes to our operations.'

Commonwealth Scholarships and the Sustainable Development Goals

The 65th anniversary of the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission (CSC) coincides with the point at which the world is crossing through to the second half of the journey to realise the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). To reflect on this occasion, the CSC Evaluation Team has compiled an examination of how Commonwealth Alumni have reported on their contributions to the SDGs.

The CSC started collecting data on the SDGs from 2019 to better understand how the work of Commonwealth Alumni supports the goals. This summary presents data gathered from 3,167 alumni who have taken part in our alumni surveys since 2019 and provided tangible examples of how they have been taking action to make effective contributions towards the SDGs.

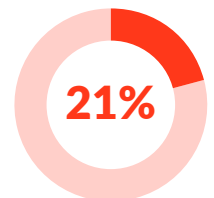
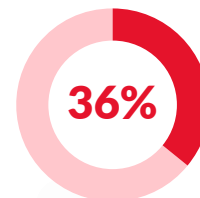
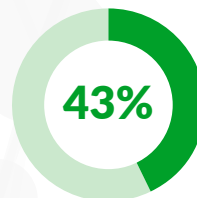
This summary also looks at the data based on alumni's countries of residence to achieve a better understanding of the geographic spread of Commonwealth Alumni working towards the SDGs. Based on this methodology, countries have been divided up into seven regions: the Caribbean, Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, South America, and the Pacific.

Overall, from 2019 to 2023, the top three SDGs that alumni have reported involvement with are:

Good Health and Well-Being,
Quality Education, and
Gender Equality.

When reporting on the overall global performance, the Sustainable Development Report (SDR) 2024 cites Good Health and Well-Being and Gender Equality in the list of goals where nations have globally shown a better performance.

Top three SDGs that participating alumni have reported involvement with from 2019 to 2023



Total participants from each year across all regions:
2019 (682), 2020 (711), 2021 (656), 2022 (625), and 2023 (493).

Regionally, the top three SDGs selected by the participating alumni based in Africa and Asia are the same as the overall top three goals, aside from a slight variation in the order in which each goal is prioritised. By contrast, the SDGs prioritised by other regions deviate from those favoured globally. SDG 10, Reduced Inequalities, appeared as a notable outlier in Europe, North America and the Pacific. In the Caribbean, SDG 8 was seen as a priority goal, suggesting a greater focus on Decent Work and Economic Growth in this region. Finally, South America favoured SDG 6, Clean Water and Sanitation.

Commonwealth Scholars Making a Global Impact

Discover how Commonwealth Scholars are contributing to the achievement of the SDGs through their groundbreaking work in diverse fields. From improving livelihoods in local communities to shaping national policies, these stories showcase the transformative power of education and collaboration across the Commonwealth.



Name: Chanelle Fingal-Robinson
Country: Trinidad and Tobago
Award Year: 2009
Scheme: Split-site Scholarship

'When I was the Social Impact Specialist at the port in Jamaica, I was responsible for the social management of the 2017 dredging campaign. As part of my duties, I designed, executed, and managed the livelihood support system that was implemented during the dredging campaign. Through this system, over 250 fisherfolk were able to apply for compensation, something that was never done before. IDB Invest, who were the project financiers, have used the system as a best-practice approach for its other clients.'



Name: Nerry Corr
Country: The Gambia
Award Year: 2009
Scheme: Distance Learning Master's Scholarship

'I successfully raised awareness in farming communities on diseases that may destroy livestock. I managed projects on sustainable livestock management (poultry and small ruminants, sheep, and goats), and the vaccination against CBPP and PPR minimised the mortality amongst animals. This yielded a very good economic return in terms of animal sales, milk sales and other animal byproducts.'



Name: Sudhir Kumar
Country: India
Award Year: 2011
Scheme: Split-Site Scholarship

'The valuable insights into dosimeter response and cavity theory furnished by research carried out during my PhD project have significantly improved small-beam radiotherapy dosimetry. The research work being carried out by me is of great significance to clinical radiotherapy world-wide for treatments of cancer patients receiving radiotherapy. This is because the success of radiotherapy depends on the accuracy, precision, and conformity of the dose distribution over the tumour volume and organs at risk, such as the precise delivery of the planned treatment.'



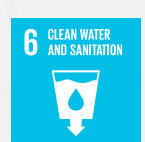
Name: Zoe Christina Apostolidou
Country: Cyprus
Award Year: 2011
Scheme: Commonwealth PhD Scholarship

'I have conducted research on homophobic and transphobic bullying in schools and written the National Report of Cyprus. The research was part of the European Commission supported HOMBAT project. The findings of the research were used for the design and creation of a framework for the prevention and combatting of homophobic and transphobic bullying in schools in Greece, Cyprus, and Lithuania.'



Name: Cynthia Williams
Country: Belize
Award Year: 2018
Scheme: Commonwealth Master's Scholarship

'I was the Chair for the National Gender and Gender-based Violence Committee, where my main responsibility was to guide the process of coordination activities at the national level. This process included actors from various government entities such as Education, National Security, UN entities, Civil Society, and other statutory bodies dealing with issues within the family, magistracy, and others. In addition, I was also responsible for providing support to the implementation of the National Gender Policy and the National Gender-Based Violence Action Plan.'



Name: Elijah Odundo
Country: Kenya
Award Year: 2013
Scheme: Distance Learning Master's Scholarship

'I supported the development of different county water policies that are being used in those counties [surrounding Lake Victoria, Kenya] to streamline water and sanitation service provision.'



7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY



Name: Velma Mukhekhe Mukoro
Country: Kenya
Award Year: 2016
Scheme: Shared Master's Scholarship

'I implemented solar hybrid mini grids in remote rural areas of Kenya. This involved community sensitisation to the benefits of renewable electricity, training local solar technicians, and capacity building initiatives. As a result, 15 mini-grids were implemented in Marsabit and Turkana Counties, and one mini-grid was implemented in the Kalobeyei refugee settlement. On average (by April 2018), 215 households had access to electricity from the mini-grid in each village.'

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



Name: Samuel Wills
Country: Australia
Award Year: 2010
Scheme: Commonwealth Master's Scholarship

'My co-author and I developed a new method for measuring poverty: using satellites to count people living in darkness at night. This resulted in a better understanding of the geographical spread of rural poverty and inequality around the world, and how it is affected by oil booms. Our work was published and received a prize for the best paper in the Journal of the Association of Environmental and Resource Economists in 2018. Some of my other research contributed to changes in Norway's \$1 trillion sovereign wealth fund, and I now lead the World Bank's economic policy dialogue in Kiribati and Nauru.'

9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



Name: Cynthia Adrienne
Country: Seychelles
Award Year: 2016
Scheme: Commonwealth Master's Scholarship

'I was involved in Open Cities Africa, which is an initiative by World Bank Project and the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) aiming at building skills, data and networks to support disaster risk management and urban planning in Africa. After two years of stakeholder consultation and involvement, we were able to finalise the first Spatial Data Sharing Policy that was approved by the Cabinet Minister in March 2020. The aim of the policy is to facilitate access to spatial data within the framework of existing legislation and policies, thereby permitting wider accessibility and the use of spatial data to enhance decision-making for socio-economic development.'

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



Name: Bisimwa Mulemangabo
Country: Uganda
Award Year: 2018
Scheme: Shared Master's Scholarship

'I am currently advocating for what I call 'The New Innovation Challenge' (NIC), a new way of encouraging innovation among university educated youth, in particular the refugee youth, to address the unemployment challenge in Uganda. The NIC includes a series of trainings on innovation using the Human Centred Design approach combined with financial literacy, followed with inspirational speeches, and then an innovation prize to groups of trainees. Through the project, ten refugee youth were trained and formed three groups. Each group researched and developed their group projects which were vetted by a group of judges. The best project was awarded a seed fund of USD 1,000.'

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



Name: Joseph Ssemanobe Mutebi
Country: Uganda
Award Year: 2016
Scheme: Commonwealth Master's Scholarship

'Seven highway bridges over rivers in Western Uganda have been substantially completed in the last two years, including one at the border between Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda. These are meant to provide reliable connectivity for movement of people and commercial goods hence social and economic development. I have been directly involved in the design and construction of this infrastructure.'

12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



Name: Lee Jing
Country: Malaysia
Award Year: 2009
Scheme: Shared Master's Scholarship

'I conducted research on the feasibility of the country ratifying the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants and the Minamata Convention on Mercury. The research is used as the justification for the need to conduct a complete review of the Environmental Quality Act 1974 of Malaysia, and the revision of the current Environmental Policy of Malaysia. Malaysia has now embarked on a revamp of chemical governance, starting from the revision of all relevant legislation, as well as a review of the adequacy of the current Environmental Policy of Malaysia.'



Name: Nelson Amo
Country: Ghana
Award Year: 2011
Scheme: Shared Master's Scholarship

'I serve as Grant Manager for the Ghana Climate Venture Facility, a World Bank-sponsored project which saw the design of the first ever climate focused SME fund as well as a climate business investment readiness program in Ghana. This has supported the growth of small and growing businesses in Ghana and their access to funding. By seeding the fund with an investment of \$1.5m, the fund has raised more capital from other investors and invested over \$3m in Ghanaian SMEs.'



Name: Mohammed Maqueshudul Bhuiyan
Country: Bangladesh
Award Year: 2011
Scheme: Distance Learning Master's Scholarship

'From my position, I work to assist my organisation to coordinate and help relevant ministry formulating and updating regulations concerning safety issues of fish and fish products. I also assist my agency in ensuring compliance of fish and fish products with national safety regulations as well as with importing country's requirements, and thereby ensuring supply of quality and safe seafoods to consumers at home and abroad.'



Name: Tonthoza Nothalndo
Country: Malawi
Award Year: 2019
Scheme: Distance Learning Master's Scholarship

'Sustainable Farming Solutions (SFS), my venture, is a land restoration, conservation, and extension enterprise. Currently, through SFS, we are working with communities incorporating traditional farming methods with ecological principles to create more resilient systems rooted in ideas that have been discussed and developed by local communities. My contributions to restoration interventions will be to provide novel practical exposure to innovators and researchers and the application of best practices by communities to other farming communities to help troubleshoot and provide readymade solutions for information seekers and project developers.'



Name: Darryl Stellmach
Country: Canada
Award Year: 2015
Scheme: Commonwealth PhD Scholarship

'I have been a central member of a small group of academics and practitioners who are adapting academic social research methods to the demands of emergency response settings. The resulting set of rapid research and assessment tools is being deployed globally in different institutional and emergency response settings, which has led to an increased uptake of qualitative information and local or community-based perspectives in crisis decision-making. The tools and techniques have been recognised and used by the UK and other international governments, as well as major international actors in the field of emergency response, such as Médecins Sans Frontières.'



Name: Fundi Ngundi
Country: Kenya
Award Year: 2013
Scheme: Shared Master's Scholarship

'I helped set up a crowdfunding association in Africa which has influenced policies around regulating and adopting crowdfunding as an alternative source of funding in over 15 countries in Africa. I lobbied the parliament of Kenya in drafting and adopting the bill around making Nairobi an International Financial Centre. The Nairobi International Financial Centre Act has since been passed as an Act of Parliament and the Nairobi International Finance Centre Authority established.'



Highlights from the CSC 65th Anniversary Alumni Census

Thank you to all alumni who completed the CSC Alumni Census earlier this year. The census was open to all Commonwealth Alumni and 3,432 completed the survey, sharing updates on your employment, awards, voluntary activities, and memories of your time as a Commonwealth Scholar.

CSC Global Community

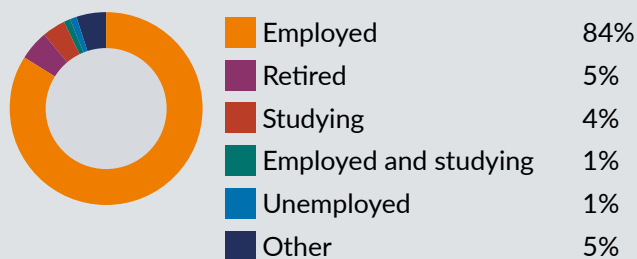
Census respondents represented 58 former and current Commonwealth countries and territories, from Australia to Montserrat, and every cohort of scholars from 1960-2022. 48% of respondents were awarded a Commonwealth Master's Scholarship and 24% a Commonwealth PhD Scholarship. 9% were awarded a Commonwealth Fellowship.

From 58 Commonwealth countries and territories, respondents are now based across the world, living and working in 101 countries.

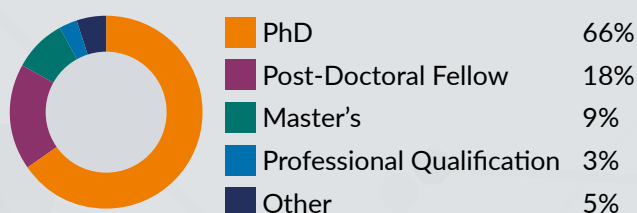
Map of alumni by region of residence



Employment and studies



Studying



The top 3 sectors of employment were:



**Academic/
higher
education**
38%



**Private
sector**
15%



**Public
sector**
13%

The top 3 fields of employment were:



Education
26%



**Human health
& social work
activities**
22%



**Professional,
scientific
& technical
activities**
16%

'Treat this award as a stepping stone towards fulfilling all the ambitions that you have imagined for your future. It is a one of its kind opportunity to experience different cultures and learn something new with each passing day. Make your country proud and don't forget to have fun in the process!'

Commonwealth Split-site Scholar from India

Volunteerism and public appointments

62% of respondents are involved in charitable or community outreach activities and 21% hold or have held a public appointment.

There is a strong charitable ethos amongst Commonwealth Alumni. Census respondents shared that they volunteer in various activities in their local community, as well as supporting the work of governmental and multilateral bodies. Activities span across many different areas including education, health, agriculture, gender equality, poverty eradication, and entrepreneurship.

44% of those who hold or have held a public appointment have done so as board members and 29% are chairing or have chaired an organisation.

Advice to new Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows

In September 2024, the CSC will welcomed its 65th cohort of Commonwealth Scholars. Alumni were asked to share advice to these new Scholars as they embark on their studies.

'The Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship allows you to engage in a transformational network of Scholars and students from around the world that could change your life or the lives of many others. Do not be afraid to engage and share with others as it will help in your growth and also create growth opportunities for others.'

Commonwealth Scholar from Jamaica

'Grab every opportunity that comes your way! Go to talks, seminars and conferences – and introduce yourself. Ask questions, be present, be bold, make friends, be curious and work hard. This opportunity can open so many doors for you if you only have the courage to cross the threshold.'

Commonwealth PhD Scholar from South Africa

The critical role of zoonotic disease surveillance in public health



Akeemat Opeyemi Ayinla
2020 Commonwealth Shared Scholar
Nigeria
MSc One Health
Royal Veterinary College



Akeemat Opeyemi Ayinla is a Research Fellow at the African Centre of Excellence for Genomics of Infectious Diseases, focusing on identifying zoonotic pathogens to enhance early detection and prevention strategies.

There are over 200 known types of zoonoses, infectious diseases which are transmitted from animals to humans. Zoonotic pathogens can be bacterial, viral or parasitic and are spread through direct animal-human contact, or indirectly through water, food and the environment. Zoonotic diseases are a major public health concern, as the COVID-19 global pandemic has shown. Early detection and prevention, alongside enhanced disease surveillance is therefore critical in protecting human and animal health.

Supporting the next generation of African scientists

I am a Research Fellow at the African Centre of Excellence for Genomics of Infectious Diseases (ACEGID). My research is focused on the identification of zoonotic pathogens in domestic and wild animal species to facilitate early detection and prevention strategies. Treating animal health has a significant impact on human health by reducing the risk of animal-human disease transmission.

My work can be approached in two key ways – reacting to disease outbreaks and conducting disease surveillance in areas where environmental and social factors increase the likelihood of a disease outbreak to implement prevention strategies.

In 2023, Nigeria experienced a large outbreak of Lassa fever, an acute viral haemorrhagic disease caused by the Lassa virus. The virus is transmitted to humans through direct contact with, or the contamination of food and household items through droppings and urine by infected rodents.

Alongside other researchers, I supported the public health response by conducting surveillance to identify areas with a high potential for further outbreaks. This involved mapping out areas with high populations of rodents, such as households, farms and fields, and taking samples from rodents and people to identify the risk to public health. Data from this surveillance was used to understand the prevalence of the virus in communities where no cases had been reported and to implement prevention strategies where needed.

Working with communities is a very important part of my work. To conduct our surveillance, we needed to first communicate with community leaders how our research works, its importance to preventing outbreaks and protecting human health, as well as what the outcomes of our findings might mean in practical terms for community members. Even if we detect low prevalence rates of a disease, it is important to use these opportunities to alert people to the risks posed by zoonotic diseases and work together to stay ahead of these pathogens.

Supporting the next generation of African scientists

Prior to my Commonwealth Scholarship, I had worked in the field of veterinary medicine in West Africa for over six years. Following my Master's in One Health, I expected I would continue to work in this field with an expanded understanding of the connection between humans, animals and our shared environment. However, my course and course mates exposed me to so much more and I found a new interest in biological sciences and the application of molecular biology techniques.

This led me to my current role at ACEGID. ACEGID was founded in 2014 as a centre of excellence to address challenges in Africa by reducing the shortage of skilled personnel and inadequate tools for research and innovation. One of ACEGID's missions is to train the next generation of African Scientists by empowering local researchers with advanced molecular biology skills.

Working at ACEGID provides me with a unique experience of being a student and teacher. To achieve our mission, when we learn a new technique or protocol or procedure, you disseminate this to other researchers. Knowledge extension was a key goal in my Commonwealth Scholarship application and I believe this is one of my major tools to achieve change.

The combination of the knowledge I gained during my Master's and that which I am gaining at ACEGID has helped me build the confidence to impart knowledge. Since joining ACEGID, I have trained over 30 African scientists and students on molecular biology techniques, most importantly next-generation sequencing (NGS). NGS is used to identify genetic variations in diseases and contributes to the early detection of pathogens which is key in tackling infectious diseases.

With local scientists now trained to conduct NGS, we are reducing reliance on countries outside of the continent to analyse samples and shipping times to share samples. This also means we can more quickly identify pathogens and respond to disease outbreaks.

'The Commonwealth Scholarship is a once in a lifetime opportunity. I'm truly glad about my experience and the doors it has opened for me. My life is better for it.'



Addressing the impact of tourism on Fiji's economy through evidence-based policy



Nicholla Serena Chan
2023 Commonwealth Scholar
Fiji
MSc Economics
University of Bristol



Nicholla Serena Chan is dedicated to understanding and mitigating the effects of Dutch disease on Fiji's economy while promoting sustainable and equitable economic development.

Tourism is the backbone of Fiji's economy, employing nearly 40% of the country's workforce as hotel workers, handicraft sellers, and activity operators among other services. While many people depend on tourism for their livelihoods, the rapid development of the tourism sector in Fiji has the potential to produce unwanted effects, such as the Dutch disease phenomenon.

When a growing sector, such as tourism, sees high investment and an influx of foreign currency this can increase the value of a country's exchange rate, making exports more costly while imports get cheaper. Although the tourism sector may benefit from this situation, it can produce a detrimental effect on other sectors as their goods and services become more expensive on the international market.

In the classic case of Dutch disease, the discovery of natural gas reserves in the Netherlands precipitated a huge investment in the country's oil and gas sector which appreciated the national currency and damaged exports from other industries, such as manufacturing. As manufacturing started to decline and unemployment increased, the country experienced lower economic growth, a loss of international competitiveness, and ultimately deindustrialisation.

Although signs of Dutch disease in Fiji are not necessarily negative, they could indicate sectoral imbalances within Fiji's economy and an over reliance on tourism. However, through strategies such as diversification of the economy, the government can boost Fiji's other industries, including manufacturing, to stave off the worst effects of Dutch disease. As manufacturing is often seen as a more productive sector in economics, intervening to stimulate growth and attract investment in the sector would go a long way towards rebalancing the country's economy.

Tackling economic challenges through strategic policymaking

Since the onset of COVID-19, the cost of living has escalated for many Fijians. By addressing potential Dutch disease effects through careful analysis and strategic policymaking, the Government can help alleviate the cost-of-living crisis and provide greater financial security for its citizens. Economic reforms should focus on fostering innovation within industries affected by Dutch disease to enable the government to improve domestic economic conditions, including employment rates, inflation control, and balance of payments stability.

‘The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Samoa offers an important opportunity to focus on the issues we are facing in the Pacific, including climate change and brain drain, and promote the Pacific as a destination to work in.’

Through my scholarship work, I hope to provide valuable insights on how the government can best spend its resources to ensure steady and sustainable economic development. I am also keen to encourage a more analytical and evidence-based approach to policymaking.

Currently, there are challenges in accessing timely data and statistics, and a pressing need to expand the use of statistical software within government. At the same time there are also positive enabling factors, such as the Fijian government’s partner relationships with multilateral institutions like the Asian Development Bank and the International Monetary Fund. These institutions help promote professional skill-building and offer technical assistance for development projects in countries like Fiji. Leveraging these partnerships successfully would not only provide access to valuable data insights but also improve the capacity of government employees to monitor and interpret trends within the economy through statistical software.

Building a culture of evidence-based policymaking

Prior to my scholarship, I worked as the Senior Economic Planning Officer in the Ministry of Public Enterprises in Fiji, and I am excited to use the expertise I have gained from studying in the UK to influence sustainable economic policy when I return home.

During my studies, I have learned advanced research skills, including programme and policy evaluation and have become proficient in statistical software, data analysis, and research methods. These skills will enable me to conduct and communicate credible research to help inform policymakers at a national level and increase learning among my colleagues. I have also had many opportunities

to network and form connections with a range of different people. This has broadened my cultural knowledge and critical thinking, which I believe will help me initiate and implement development projects in Fiji.

I am passionate about creating a culture of evidence-based decision making and critical thinking within government that seriously considers what we want to input our resources into. By increasing the quality of policies that we formulate, the government can provide a more equitable offering to people at a local level with better working conditions and regulations and more financial empowerment for individuals.

I also want to help mitigate the brain drain that we are currently experiencing in Fiji, which is a major stress factor on labour force, by helping to upskill people and enable them to contribute to the economy. The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Samoa offers an important opportunity to focus on the issues we are facing in the Pacific, including climate change and brain drain, and promote the Pacific as a destination to work in.

Looking to the future, I am excited to join the alumni network and connect with people from across the Pacific. It is inspiring to learn about the work of other Scholars and what they have achieved over the years, and I am keen to mentor future Scholars from the Pacific and use my experience to help support their journey.

‘I’ve visited rural areas where they have lack of access to government services, financial services and things like that. And I think this really hinders their ability to empower themselves and uplift themselves out of the cycle. So, this has been my motivation.’

Empowering Solomon Islands through digital transformation



Martiza Nanau

2022 Commonwealth Distance Learning Scholar
Solomon Islands

MSc Management and Information Systems: Change and Development
The University of Manchester

Martiza Nanau is nearing the completion of a Master of Science in Management and Information Systems: Change and Development from the University of Manchester.

Bridging education and real-world impact

As I near the completion of my Master of Science in Management and Information Systems: Change and Development from the University of Manchester, I find myself reflecting on the unique and challenging journey I've undertaken as a Commonwealth Distance Learning Scholar. Balancing full-time work at the Office of the Prime Minister and Cabinet in the Solomon Islands while pursuing advanced studies has been no small feat, but it's a journey that has deeply enriched my professional and personal life.

When I applied for the MSc programme, I was driven by a desire to better understand how management of information systems could contribute to organisational effectiveness, particularly in a developing country like the Solomon Islands, where we face significant technical and technological challenges. My studies have not only provided me with theoretical knowledge but also practical insights that I've been able to apply directly to my work. This dual approach has been particularly rewarding, allowing me to see the immediate impact of what I've learned.

Building global networks for local change

One of the most significant outcomes of my Commonwealth Scholarship has been the opportunity to build and expand a professional network. Despite the virtual nature of the programme, I've been able to connect with fellow students from around the world, including those from the US and Africa, as well as with the faculty at The University of Manchester. This global network has been invaluable, providing diverse perspectives and collaborative opportunities that I would not have encountered otherwise.

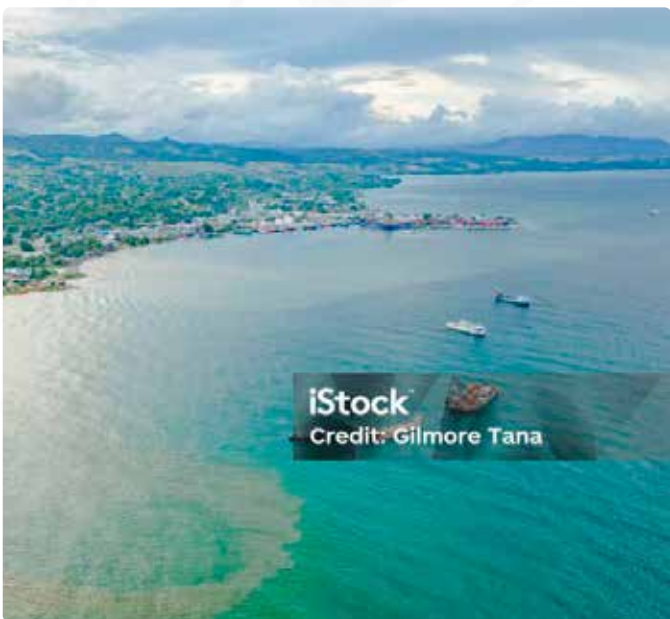
In addition to my academic and professional growth, I've also taken on the role of voluntarily coordinating the Commonwealth Alumni Association in the Solomon Islands. This has allowed me to give back to my community in meaningful ways. For instance, with support from the CSC and the British High Commission, we've organised and delivered capacity-building workshops in rural secondary schools. These initiatives have been particularly impactful, as many students in these areas have never had the opportunity to interact with computers or learn basic IT skills. Witnessing their eagerness to learn and the appreciation from the school administration has been incredibly fulfilling.

‘Distance learning has allowed me to stay close to my family during difficult times, especially after the loss of my father. This experience underscored the importance of family support in achieving one’s goals.’

Overcoming the challenges of distance learning

Being a distance learner has its unique advantages and challenges. On a personal note, the most profound benefit was being able to stay close to my family during difficult times. I lost my father two years ago, and being in the Solomon Islands allowed me to support my mother and continue with my studies. This experience underscored the importance of family support in achieving one’s goals.

However, distance learning also presented significant challenges, particularly in terms of juggling work, studies, and personal responsibilities. The internet connectivity issues in the Solomon Islands were another hurdle, especially during online tutorials, where network disruptions were common. Despite these obstacles, my passion for learning and my commitment to enhancing my skills in information systems management kept me motivated. I firmly believe that the knowledge and skills I’ve gained through this scholarship will be crucial in my efforts to drive digital transformation and organisational effectiveness in my country.



Looking ahead: a vision for the future

Looking ahead, my immediate goal is to complete my MSc, but my ambitions extend beyond that. I am committed to raising awareness about the importance of digital infrastructure in improving organisational efficiency across the Solomon Islands. Whether I continue working at the Prime Minister’s office or take on a new role elsewhere, I am determined to contribute to the development of my country.

My advice to future Commonwealth Scholars, especially those from developing countries, is to persevere despite the challenges. Education is the key to unlocking a better future, and the difficulties you encounter along the way will only make your success more meaningful. I also encourage you to build and nurture networks, as they can provide support, inspiration, and opportunities that will help you achieve your goals.

As I look back on my journey, I am immensely grateful for the support from the CSC and the connections I’ve made. These experiences have not only shaped my career but have also deepened my commitment to giving back to my community. Through sharing my knowledge and experiences, I hope to inspire and assist the next generation of Commonwealth Scholars in the Solomon Islands.

‘I firmly believe that the knowledge and skills I’ve gained through this scholarship will be crucial in my efforts to drive digital transformation and organisational effectiveness in my country.’

Alumni news

The updates below (listed by year of award) summarise just some of the achievements of our global alumni. To let us know about your successes, email alumni@cscuk.org.uk

1968

Graeme Wynn has been awarded the 2024 American Society for Environmental History Distinguished Scholar Award in recognition of his contributions to our understanding of landscape transformation in environments and periods ranging from the eighteenth-century Atlantic to the prospects of the Anthropocene. (Scholar from the United Kingdom, University of Toronto)



1995

Losang Rabgey and her family were awarded the Meritorious Service Cross in recognition for their lifetime dedication to the service and empowerment of Tibetan communities in Tibet. The Meritorious Service Cross and Medal are bestowed upon individuals whose specific actions have been inspiring and have made a positive difference, demonstrating a passionate commitment to fostering meaningful change. (Scholar from Canada, PhD Anthropology, SOAS, University of London)

2003

Rita Akosua Dickson has been re-appointed as Vice Chancellor of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) for a second two-year term. At her first appointment in 2020, she became the first female Vice Chancellor of KNUST. (Scholar from Ghana, PhD Pharmacognocny, King's College London; 2012 Academic Fellow, Ghanaian Plants, UCL School of Pharmacy)



1984

Kwan S P Lam has been re-elected as President of the Hong Kong Metropolitan University for a four-year term. He is the President and Chair Professor of Environmental Chemistry at the university and is chairman of numerous committees. (Scholar from Hong Kong, PhD Zoology, University of Sheffield)

1986

Suzanne Kresta has been appointed Dean of the Faculty of Sustainable Design Engineering at the University of Prince Edward Island for a five-year term. (Scholar from Canada, MSc Chemical Plant Design, University of Leeds)

1993

Nigel Andrew Lincoln Clarke has been appointed Deputy Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund. In 2018 he became Jamaica's Minister of Finance and the Public Service. Prior to this, he served as Ambassador of Economic Affairs leading Jamaica's economic policy response to the COVID-19 pandemic. He is also a Jamaican Member of Parliament, company director, business executive and statesman. (Scholar from Jamaica, MSc Statistics (Applied), University of Oxford)

2004

Chinnaswamy Anandharamakrishnan received the Rastriya Vyan Puraskar 2024 award for his contributions to the agricultural science sector. Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar is India's highest award in the fields of science, technology, and technology-led innovations. Chinnaswamy is the director of the CSIR-National Institute for Interdisciplinary Science and Technology (NIIST). (Scholar from India, PhD Computational Fluid Dynamics and Food Processing, Loughborough University)

2005

Manish Hari Charan Singh Gaur has been appointed Director of the Indian Institute of Information Technology (IIIT), Una. As the founder-director of the Centre for Advanced Studies at Dr APJ Abdul Kalam University, he has led the development of programmes in Cyber Security, Mechatronics, Nano Technology, and Energy Sciences. (Scholar from India, DPhil Computer Science, University of Sussex; 2012 Academic Fellow, Computer Science, University of Glasgow)

2013

M. Abdul Aziz was awarded the 2023 Bangabandhu Award for Wildlife Conservation in the category of wildlife education and research. The award aims to encourage national nature and wildlife conservationist organisations and individuals. (Scholar from Bangladesh, PhD Conservation Biology, University of Kent)



Rezwanul Huque Khan has been appointed Independent Director of the Chittagong Stock Exchange (CSE) for a three-year term. He is a Professor at the Institute of Business Administration, University of Dhaka. (Scholar from Bangladesh, PhD Business Administration, University of Warwick)

2018

Michael Mensah is the winner of the University of Regina's Three Minute Thesis (3MT) competition for his research presentation, 'Fresh solutions for salty cows'. He is a PhD student at the university researching elevated salt concentration in the Prairie as a water quality issue that endangers livestock health. (Shared Scholar from Ghana, MSc Integrated Management of Freshwater Environments, Queen Mary University of London)

2019

Ejiro Ikoko is a TRA VISIONS 2024 Young Researcher Competition winner in the cross-modality category. She was awarded for her research exploring mobility as a service (MaaS) for women and goods travelling in Lagos, Nigeria. (Scholar from Nigeria, MSc Transport Planning, University of Leeds)



Obituaries

1963

John Alexander Wilson Gunn was a world-renowned scholar in 17th and 18th-century political thought. He was head of the Department of Political Studies at Queen's University and elected to the Royal Society of Canada in recognition of his contributions to the social sciences. He passed away on 7 March 2023. (Scholar from Canada, DPhil Social Studies: Political Theory, University of Oxford)

Stephen Michael Waddams is widely recognised as one of Canada's leading legal scholars. As a professor at the University of Toronto, he played a major role in making the Faculty of Law of the University of Toronto a vibrant research institution and supporting research in all fields of law. He passed away on 27 May 2023. (Scholar from Canada, BA Law, University of Cambridge)

Michael N G James was a leading researcher in crystallography and a Distinguished Professor Emeritus at the Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry of the University of Alberta. In 1968, he established the first laboratory for studying proteins by crystallography in Canada. In 2023, he was named to the Order of Canada for his groundbreaking work. He passed away on 24 July 2023. (Scholar from Canada, DPhil Chemical Crystallography, University of Oxford)

1981

Carolyn Kay was an esteemed Professor and researcher in the history department at Trent University. She served as principal of Lady Eaton College at Trent where she made important contributions to supporting and prioritising the student experience. She passed away on 25 December 2023. (Scholar from Canada, MPhil German History, University of Oxford)

Study UK Alumni Award winners

The Study UK Alumni Awards celebrate the outstanding achievements of alumni and showcase the impact and value of UK higher education. Award winners and finalists are leaders in their fields who have used their experience of studying at a UK university to make a positive contribution to their communities, professions, and countries.

Social Action Award

This award recognises alumni who have made an exceptional contribution and commitment to creating positive social change and improving the lives of others.

Winner – Global

Vijay Siddharth Pillai

2018 Commonwealth Shared Scholar
India

MPhil Education, Globalisation and International Development
University of Cambridge



Vijay (Sid) is an Education Program Advisor for Street Child in Afghanistan working to ensure children are safe, in school, and learning, especially in low resource environments and emergencies. Overseeing the education portfolio, he contributed to rolling out the programme to approximately 1,600 classes across Afghanistan, reaching an estimated 60,000 students.

Read more about Sid's work on the CSC website: bit.ly/4drWhnr

Finalist – Global

James Otai

2019 Commonwealth
Shared Scholar
Uganda

MSc Environmental and
Business Management
Bangor University



James Otai is the Co-founder and Director of Business Development and Operations at Imagine Her (IH), a Uganda-based local non-profit organisation that works with rural communities to accelerate the power and potential of women, girls, and youth. James supports IH's participants in developing sustainable ventures and becoming social entrepreneurs by creating sustainable solutions within their communities.

Check out James' recent CSC Development in Action webinar on the CSC's YouTube channel: bit.ly/3BkYKmB

Winner – Ghana

Margaret Wekem Kukeba

2013 Commonwealth Scholar
Ghana

PhD Child Health
University of Manchester



Dr Kukeba is the Dean of the School of Nursing and Midwifery at the C.K. Tedam University of Technology & Applied Sciences. She led the introduction of the academic clinician role for nurse educators and evidence-based practice into the Nursing and Midwifery Curricula.

Winner – Pakistan

Tanvir Ahmad

2013 Commonwealth Scholar
Pakistan

PhD Renewable Energy System
Durham University



Dr Tanvir Ahmad is the Energy Officer and focal person-Climate Change at UNHCR, and is responsible for implementing climate-friendly, smart energy solutions for refugees and disadvantaged host communities in Pakistan. Amongst others, he leads the activities for Afghan refugees such as Disaster Risk Management (DRM) and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR).

Read more about Tanvir's work on the CSC website:
bit.ly/3TMdm4O

Business and Innovation Award

This award recognises alumni who are initiating and contributing to creative new ideas, solutions, or business opportunities that have the potential for growth.

Winner – Pakistan

Iffat Zafar Aga

2017 Commonwealth
Distance Learning Scholar
Pakistan

MSc Global Health
University of Edinburgh



Dr Iffat Zafar Aga is the Co-Founder and Chief Operations Officer of Sehat Kahani, a telemedicine start-up based in Pakistan. This health-technology social impact initiative aims to democratise access to healthcare by using technology to connect patients with online doctors through chat, audio and video consultations.

Read more about Dr Aga's work on the CSC website:
bit.ly/3TKyXup

Science and Sustainability Award

This award recognises alumni who have distinguished themselves through their career and achievements in the world of science and sustainability.

Finalist – Global

Mustak Ayub

2012 Commonwealth Scholar
Bangladesh

PhD Oncology
Oxford Hertford



Dr Mustak Ibn Ayub is an educator, molecular oncologist, author, and science communicator. He is the founder and president of the Cancer Care and Research Trust Bangladesh (CCRTB), an organisation that promotes cancer awareness and research in Bangladesh. CCRTB has an active presence on social media for promoting cancer and health-related information.

Winner – India

Sandhya Sukumaran

2008 Commonwealth Scholar
India

PhD Aquatic Eco-genotoxicology
University of East Anglia



Dr Sandhya Sukumaran is a senior scientist in the Marine Biotechnology Division of the ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute. Dr Sukumaran specialises in marine genomics and aquaculture innovations and led the team of researchers who developed the technology to decode the genome of the Indian oil sardine.

Scholar events

(March – August 2024)

Leaders in Sustainable Development programme

The Leaders in Sustainable Development Programme supports and enables Scholars to respond to development challenges in their countries and communities.

Over 100 Scholars attended the Leaders in Sustainable Development online workshops between November 2023 and June 2024 to develop skills in writing for development, decision making, theory of change and much more.

'The Leaders in Sustainable Development Programme was eye-opening for me. I found the content very useful and practical, especially as I prepared for my research project proposals and development goals. Overall, engaging in learning outside the classroom and with peers was a valuable exercise.'

Residential workshops at Cumberland Lodge

As part of the Leaders in Sustainable Development programme, the CSC held two residential weekends for Scholars at Cumberland Lodge in Windsor Great Park.

In March, 48 Master's Scholars attended the 'Maximising your impact: training for development' workshop to explore current development issues and how they would contribute to solving them. The workshop focused on enhancing Scholars' ability to impact change through discussions, learning, and networking.

In May, 49 PhD Scholars joined the CSC's PhD conference featuring a range of keynote sessions and discussions as well as group activities allowing Scholars to showcase their research and develop their team working and analysis skills.

'The opportunity provided for networking was great and these networks opened the potential for future collaboration. The programme accorded me the opportunity to have a clearer intervention strategy in promoting and supporting development agendas back home by infusing acquired knowledge from my PhD research into nationwide development schemes. The event was exceptional and exceedingly met all of my expectations. Before I forget, the food was also good and the Cumberland staff were very supportive, friendly and helpful.'

'I was pleasantly surprised at how effective the residential nature of the conference was in encouraging interactions and networking with Scholars from a variety of backgrounds and interests. The Scholar research presentations/discussions were a particularly interesting and useful part of the whole programme. The excellent historic location of the conference, and the opportunity to explore the surroundings with fellow Scholars was also a great experience and a welcome break from research work.'



Regional Network events

Our Regional Network Coordinators organised more than 25 events between November 2023 and August 2024 for Scholars across 12 UK regions.

Regional Network Coordinators play a key role in the Commonwealth Scholarship community by supporting and bringing together Scholars in their local university region. In the South East, Scholars joined a special workshop on recent developments in health research and explored how these impacted Scholars, while also connecting with Commonwealth Alumnus Dr Henry Agbe. The Scholars in the South East also joined the Reading Half Marathon as CSC volunteers, guiding and supporting runners.

In London, Scholars participated in various activities including a special event at SOAS, University of London to mark the 65th anniversary of the CSC. The event focused on the Youth Development Index report with discussions on how Scholars could contribute to improving and implementing the report's findings in their respective countries

Midlands Scholars attended an online panel discussion on 'Writing a research proposal to pursue a PhD in the UK'. They heard from Professor Jan-Hinrik Meyer-Sahling from the School of Politics and International Relations, University of Nottingham on how to prepare a good research proposal.

Scholars in the North West and North East had the opportunity to participate in an online event to discuss the SDG progress in developing countries. The discussion was facilitated by Nonso Obikili, Economist at the United Nations Resident Coordinators Office in Abuja, and Roza Mamuye Bora, Principal Statistician at the African Development Bank (AfDB) Statistics Department. They highlighted successful initiatives and capacity-building efforts to strengthen institutional accountability and inclusiveness.



Parliamentary Reception for Commonwealth Scholars

The Parliamentary Reception held in June offered Scholars a unique opportunity to learn about the workings of the House of Commons and the House of Lords. This year, 17 Commonwealth Scholars joined the event where they engaged in discussions on the role of legislators and policymakers in the UK.

The event was organised by the CSC and the Council for Education in the Commonwealth's Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP) Support Group with support from the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK (CPA UK).

Farewell 2024

In July, Commonwealth Scholars joined Chevening and Marshall Scholars for the joint scholarship Farewell event at Alexandra Palace. The event celebrated Scholar's achievements during their time in the UK and featured Commonwealth Alumni Paballo Chauke and Khadija Amir as guest speakers.

Joining students and guests from across the world, Scholars had the chance to strengthen their international networks as they prepared to return to their home countries and make a difference in their communities.

'A memorable event in an amazing event space that enables us to freely move around and engage with people from different backgrounds and ethnicities.'

'Having the opportunity to interact with scholars from different scholarship bodies and backgrounds is always a great avenue to learn about what they are doing and areas where we have an intercept, which can be exploited for future collaborations.'

Alumni events

(March – August 2024)

Global events

Between 18-22 March 2024, the British Council, on behalf of the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK (CSC), hosted the fourth annual global conference for Commonwealth Scholars and Alumni, Interchange24.

The five-day programme featured a mix of roundtable discussions, skills workshops, and networking sessions. The overarching theme of the conference was 'Inclusive societies – cultural diversity, disability and gender roles'. You can watch recordings of the roundtable discussions on the CSC's YouTube channel, where you can also find recordings from previous conferences: youtube.com/@CSCintheUK

In-country events

Ghana

On 14 February 2024, Commonwealth Alumni in Ghana attended a panel discussion on, 'Strengthening gender equality in STEM education in Ghana'. The event was attended by representatives from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and experts representing tertiary education and gender institutions. The panel discussed the importance and shortcomings of gender mainstreaming and the importance of tackling this at a national level.

Nigeria

On 1 February 2024, Commonwealth Alumni in Nigeria attended a panel discussion on, 'Intersectionality of gender and its impact on higher education'. The event was attended by representatives from the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). Panellists highlighted challenges experienced by women in accessing higher education and shared potential strategies to address these.

Pakistan

On 4 February, Commonwealth Alumni in Lahore attended a networking reception and panel discussion on the topic, 'Challenging gender roles in Pakistani society – women empowerment and gender equality'. Alumni were joined by representatives from the Government of Pakistan, universities, and international NGOs. The event shed light on the challenges and opportunities surrounding gender equality in Pakistan and highlighted the impact of gender disparity.

Alumni Association events

India

On 16 March, the Association of Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows (ACSF) in India celebrated the founding of the association with a panel discussion on, 'Global Prosperity – the three pillars of sustainable development – social, economic, and environmental'. Panellists and attendees discussed the complex interplay between social, economic, and environmental factors and its importance in achieving sustainable development.

Malawi

On 2 February 2024, the Malawi Commonwealth Alumni Association Network (MCAAN) hosted a panel discussion on access and inclusion challenges and opportunities in Malawi's main economic sectors: agriculture, mining, and gender and social welfare. Commonwealth Alumni were joined by representatives from Malawi's ministries of Mining, Agriculture, and Gender to explore the challenges and opportunities.

Trinidad and Tobago

In June, the Commonwealth Scholars Alumni Association of Trinidad and Tobago (CSAATT) hosted a social meet-up to reconnect alumni. Alumni shared ideas on ways to strengthen the local alumni association and promote Commonwealth Scholarships.

Uganda

On 6 February, the Sanyu African Midwives Commonwealth Alumni Association (SAMCA) delivered a workshop to midwives and midwifery students on the management of complications of labour and neonatal resuscitation.

On 16 March, the Commonwealth Scholarships and Fellowships Alumni Association of Uganda (CSFAAU) hosted a panel discussion on, 'Investing in women to accelerate progress', to mark Commonwealth Day and the broader Commonwealth theme of 'One resilient common future'. The panel discussed the challenges faced by women and girls in underprivileged and rural communities, and refugee settlements in Uganda, as well as potential solutions.

65th Anniversary Alumni Association events

This year, CSC Alumni Associations were invited to bid for funding to deliver an anniversary activity to celebrate 65 years of Commonwealth Scholarships and the impact of alumni at a national level. Seven associations were selected and are listed below.

To find out more about these activities and to get involved, contact your local alumni association using the details on the CSC website:

cscuk.fcdo.gov.uk/alumni/associations/

- Bangladesh – Commonwealth Scholars’ Summit: Towards a knowledge Hub
- Canada – 65th Anniversary of the CSC: Networking event
- Dominica – Commonwealth Scholarship In Action
- Ghana – Ghana’s human resource development: celebrating the contribution of Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows in Ghana
- Malaysia – Uniting expertise, advancing action: a CSC Alumni event for planetary health
- Solomon Islands – Expanding outreach and enhancing visibility of Commonwealth Scholarships nationally
- Zambia – Commonwealth Alumni Association of Zambia 2024 retreat: 65th CSC anniversary celebration

You can find out more about all the CSC’s Alumni Association on our website: cscuk.fcdo.gov.uk/alumni/associations/

Development in Action webinar series

February 2024

Building sustainable and resilient wind energy in India

CSC theme: Science and technology for development

Commonwealth Alumnus Dr Pradeep Kumar Dammala highlighted the potential of integrating sustainable wind energy as an alternative cooling power source for nuclear power plants during seismic events and emergencies, such as tsunamis and earthquakes.

March 2024

Utilising research evidence to promote change in remote communities in Bangladesh

CSC theme: Strengthening health systems and capacity

As the Research and Knowledge Management Lead for CARE Bangladesh, Commonwealth Alumnus Zinat Ara

Afroze presented on how research evidence has been utilised to address development challenges faced by remote communities in Bangladesh.

April 2024

Empowering women and youth in Uganda through social entrepreneurship

CSC theme: Promoting innovation and entrepreneurship

Commonwealth Alumnus James Otai is the Co-founder and Director of Business Development and Operations at Imagine Her (IH), a Uganda-based local non-profit organisation. He shared how green entrepreneurship and innovation can empower women and youth in Uganda’s remote communities to overcome unemployment and other economic challenges.

May 2024

Using feminist evaluation to shift power dynamics in international cooperation initiatives

CSC theme: Access, inclusion and opportunity

Commonwealth Alumnus Carol Miller is a long-time gender equality activist, researcher, and evaluator. She shared the ways in which feminist evaluation practitioners are challenging donors to rethink and adapt approaches to evaluation in the service of social justice and equity.

June 2024

Corporate sustainability: An organisational approach to build a sustainable world

CSC theme: Promoting innovation and entrepreneurship

Commonwealth Alumnus Souvik Ghosh discussed how corporate sustainability programmes aim to make an organisation’s purpose meaningful, systemic, and value and impact driven.

You can watch recordings of all DIA webinars on the CSC’s YouTube channel: youtube.com/@CSCintheUK



Get involved

You can stay part of the CSC community through events across the Commonwealth, by promoting our Scholarships and Fellowships to potential applicants, by joining our alumni associations and other networks, and by keeping us up to date with your recent achievements and challenges.

Alumni Associations

Meet and network with Commonwealth Alumni through your local Alumni Association. CSC alumni-run associations are present in the following countries:



Scan to find out more about Alumni Associations

Share your updates with us

We always love to hear from Commonwealth Scholars and Alumni via email or our social media channels about events you have been involved with, development activities you have undertaken, awards you have won or papers you have published.

Update your details

If you are an alumnus of the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission (CSC) and would like to update your details, or reconnect with the CSC, please complete our alumni update form. Please email alumni@cscuk.org.uk if you have any queries.



Scan to update your details

Alumni stories

Read in further detail how Commonwealth Alumni have made an impact within their organisations and communities, and across nations and internationally, by visiting our website.



Scan to find read our development impact stories

Events

Find out about upcoming CSC community events:

 @commschols

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ISSUE #17 | SEPTEMBER 24



Scholars enjoy the traditional Saturday walk to the Copper Horse in Windsor Great Park during annual Scholars' residential workshop at Cumberland Lodge.



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