

COMMONWEALTH

# YOUTH AWARDS

2021

The Commonwealth

The Commonwealth Youth Awards for  
Excellence in Development Work 2020

*Presented to*  
Rafa Usama Tamim

The Commonwealth

The Commonwealth Youth Awards for  
Excellence in Development Work 2020

*Presented to*  
Kasembo Galabuzi Brian  
Europe Region Winner

Wednesday 10 March 2021

10.00 am – 11.00 am (GMT)

Virtual Ceremony: Livestream –  
[Facebook.com/ComSecYouth](https://www.facebook.com/ComSecYouth)



The Commonwealth  
Youth Programme

# COMMONWEALTH YOUTH AWARDS

The Commonwealth Youth Awards for Excellence in Development Work aim to recognise the contribution young people aged 15-29 make towards promoting and enhancing democracy and achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It raises the profile of committed and innovative Commonwealth youth who are working hard to address pressing issues such as poverty and conflict.

The Commonwealth believes that this work should not go unnoticed, and our Youth Awards give international, regional and national recognition and support to men and women who are shining examples of young people's capacity and potential to make positive contributions to their communities, nations and the world at large.

The Awards show that our youth are not passive beneficiaries or spectators of the policies and programmes that drive development. Rather, they are actively involved in catalysing and implementing change, and are integral to the decision-making process that will lead to a more innovative and interconnected future.



## Specific objectives of the 2021 Commonwealth Youth Awards

- Highlight the contributions of young people are making to achieving the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs;
- Acknowledge the outstanding contributions young people make to Commonwealth development and democracy goals;
- Create an environment that will encourage and sustain investments in youth-led development;
- Illustrate the depth and breadth of talent, commitment and creativity that exists among young people across the Commonwealth by highlighting nominees' success stories;
- Motivate, encourage and challenge young people (age 15-29) to set high standards for their work and service at community, national, regional and international levels; and
- Give particular focus to the contributions of young people towards development and prosperity in the context of the COVID-19 global pandemic.

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## Delivering a Common Future: Connecting, Innovating, Transforming

### Virtual Programme

Welcome by Master of Ceremony

Opening Remarks by Rt Hon Patricia Scotland QC,  
Commonwealth Secretary General

### Finalist Videos and Winner Announcement – Africa Region

Cultural Act - Africa Region

### Finalist Videos and Winner Announcement – Asia Region

Cultural Act – Asia Region

### Finalist Videos and Winner Announcement – Caribbean Region

Cultural Act – Caribbean Region

### Finalist Videos and Winner Announcement – Europe & Canada Region

Cultural Act – Europe & Canada Region

### Finalist Videos and Winner Announcement – Pacific Region

Cultural Act – Pacific Region

### Commonwealth Youth COVID-19 Heroes

### Winner Announcement – Commonwealth Young Person of the Year Award 2021

Closing

**Abdulrehman Alwy**

Country: **Kenya**

Area of Work: **SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-Being**

Abdulrehman is a co-founder of 'RedSplash Kenya'; an initiative creating awareness on the importance of voluntary blood donations and working to tackle misinformation around donating. The organisation hosts educational blood drives and operates an online app for donors to register and to send out appeals. The initiative has helped serve over 5000 patients in need, and recruited hundreds of volunteers to support their campaigns.



**Wadi Ben-Hirki**

Country: **Nigeria**

Area of Work: **SDG 5 - Gender Equality**

Wadi is the founder of the 'Wadi Ben-Hirki Foundation'; an organisation which champions for the empowerment of marginalised groups in Nigeria. The foundation's initiatives include donating food and education materials to Boko Haram victims, campaigns against child marriage and sexual violence and providing safe spaces for vulnerable girls and women. These projects have collectively impacted the lives of thousands across Nigeria.



**Nawa Joe Silishebo**

Country: **Zambia**

Area of Work: **SDG 8 - Decent Work and Economic Growth**

Nawa is a co-founder of 'The Young Emerging Farmers Initiative'; which promotes and empowers young people in agribusiness and climate change action through skills training, fundraising and outreach programmes. The initiative has reached over 500,000 young people across 10 Zambian provinces in rural and urban areas and helped train 5000 youths in agribusiness, including connecting over 100 'agri-preneurs' to financial support and markets.



**Jeremiah Thoronka**

Country: **Sierra Leone**

Area of Work: **SDG 7 – Affordable and Clean Energy**

Jeremiah is the founder of 'Optim Energy'; a company that harnesses solar energy through innovative technology to create affordable, accessible and clear power for communities in Sierra Leone. The project has helped power over 150 households and 15 schools in Sierra Leone at minimal cost, which has benefitted over 10,000 people, and provides best practice training on energy efficiency and conservation to the younger generation.





**Alina Alam**

Country: **India**

Area of Work: **SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth**

Alina is the founder of 'Mitti Café'; a chain of cafes which provides experiential training and employment to adults with physical, intellectual and psychiatric disabilities. The organisation's outreach initiative also helps create awareness about inclusion and disability rights. Mitti Cafés have trained over 850 persons with disabilities and served over 5 million meals to vulnerable communities and homeless groups, including 1.3 million during the COVID-19 pandemic.



**Syed Ommer Amer**

Country: **Pakistan**

Area of Work: **SDG 9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure**

Syed is the founder of Daastan; a modern book publishing company and go-to platform for global authors. The company uses a social enterprise model to support authors to monetise their time, content and skills through online training and workshops. Daastan has supported 10,000 authors from 17 countries and helped publish over 300 titles.



**Faysal Islam**

Country: **Bangladesh**

Area of Work: **SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-Being**

Faysal is a co-founder of 'Safewheel'; an organisation that provides affordable emergency medical services through mini three-wheeled ambulances and trained medical staff onboard. The company's current 10 ambulances have served over 1000 people in rural populations in Bangladesh at 1/10th of the cost and three times faster on average than convention ambulances.



**Mogesh Sababathy**

Country: **Malaysia**

Area of Work: **SDG 14 – Life Below Water**

Mogesh is a co-founder of 'Project Ocean Hope', a youth-led group that aims to raise the visibility of ocean issues and environmental conservation through campaigns and youth leadership training. The group has also run educational community projects to reduce littering and unsustainable fishing practices, and an ocean literacy webinar series on waste management, reaching over 10,000 individuals across 15 countries.



## AWARDS FINALISTS

## CARIBBEAN

### Taahir Bulbulia

Country: **Barbados**

Area of Work: **SDG 4 – Quality Education**

Taahir is the founder of the 'Sports Science Society'; a student-based organisation that promotes the holistic benefits of sport and provides mentorship to at-risk youth on mental health, sports law and drug prevention. The programme has trained 30 volunteers across 10 organisations and reached 500 young people in the region, particularly helping to tackle bullying and mental health issues.



### Bevon Chadel Charles

Country: **Grenada**

Area of Work: **SDG 2 – Zero Hunger**

Bevon is the founder of 'Akata Farms'; an organisation that aims to create sustainable farms and livelihoods across the Caribbean through climate-smart agriculture. The farms operate across 100 acres providing fresh, quality goods in-person and online, and the organisation provides peer-to-peer mentorship to young people, particularly women, looking to start businesses in agriculture.



### Dawsher Charles

Country: **Trinidad and Tobago**

Area of Work: **SDG 4 – Quality Education**

Dawsher is the founder of 'Survival Scholars'; a project that promotes self-care, good mental health and well-being to at-risk and disadvantaged youths through social and emotional learning skills, the arts and storytelling. The project has reached over 6000 young people and parents and equipped youths with stressor coping mechanisms for school and life, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.



### Jubilanté Joanna Cutting

Country: **Guyana**

Area of Work: **SDG 9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure**

Jubilanté is the founder of the 'Guyana Animation Network', which raises awareness and advocates for youth opportunities and skills training in digital media, animation and the STEM subjects. The programme includes Digital Summer Camps, a 'Girls in ICT' initiative and mentorship support. The programme has trained over 300 young people in ICT and entrepreneurship, and supported critical online training in business marketing and digital skills.



## AWARDS FINALISTS

## EUROPE/CANADA

### Diego Armando Aparicio

Country: **Cyprus**

Area of Work: **SDG 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions**

Diego is the founder of 'QueerWave'; the first LGBTQ+ film festival in Cyprus designed to tackle stigma and promote a more inclusive society through art and cinema. The 2020 festival's online screening consisted of 25 films and was attended by over 1000 individuals. Queerwave has helped connect new audiences and raise important issues around social inequalities in order to foster inclusivity and peacebuilding.



### Siena Castellon

Country: **United Kingdom**

Area of Work: **SDG 4 – Quality Education**

Siena is the founder of 'Neurodiversity Celebration Week'; an initiative designed to encourage schools and colleges to change the way they perceive autistic students and students with learning differences. In addition to providing practical advice on overcoming challenges at school, the programme provides free resources to help teachers better support neurodiverse students. The 2020 programme reached over 850 schools and more than 500,000 students across the world, and the online mentoring programme currently has over 1000 global subscribers.



### Bradley Heslop

Country: **United Kingdom**

Area of Work: **SDG 1 – No Poverty**

Bradley is the co-founder of WSV Global; an organisation that develops community business solutions to social needs affecting communities living on less than \$5 a day. These solutions, packaged as franchises, work to provide a range of vital products and services including addressing menstrual hygiene challenges, access to solar-energy and recycling waste into fertiliser. WSV Global has helped support over 40,000 vulnerable people and helped over 250 entrepreneurs scale their work and income.



### Ellenor McIntosh

Country: **United Kingdom**

Area of Work: **SDG 6 – Clean Water and Sanitation**

Ellenor is the co-founder and inventor of 'Twipes'; a flushable, biodegradable wet wipe made of wood pulp. Through the production and sales of Twipes, the company aims to reduce the environmental damage caused by traditional wet wipes. The product has been sold to restaurants, gyms and hotel chains across the UK and a percentage of the business profits are donated to creating clean water systems in Uganda.





**Maselina Iuta**

Country: **Samoa**

Area of Work: **SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-Being**

Maselina is the Project Assistant and Founding Member of the Deaf Association of Samoa; an organisation which advocates for the development of inclusive opportunities, policies and legislation for deaf and hearing-impaired persons. Their work has helped include sign language and deaf interpretation in national health programming and Maselina has provided interpretation for the Samoan Prime Minister's broadcast during International Week of the Deaf 2020.



**'Ilaisaane Lolohea Manu**

Country: **Tonga**

Area of Work: **SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth**

'Ilaisaane is a national youth advocate and Programme Administrator & Community Liaison Officer for GO GREEN!; a youth-led community initiative creating employment opportunities through entrepreneurship and mentorship support. The programme also provides affordable, sustainable fashion as well as encouraging fashion and design talent and ethical recycling. The programme has engaged over 1000 people through community-led outreach initiatives, provided basic work skills to hundreds of volunteers and repurposed over 1000 pieces of clothing.



**Shanal Sivan**

Country: **Fiji**

Area of Work: **SDG 5 – Gender Equality**

Shanal is the founder and producer of 'Jazbaat'; Fiji's biggest digital storytelling platform for women, creating an online space to discuss issues affecting them. The platform has reached over 300,000 women and helped tackle sensitive and important issues including domestic violence, supporting children with special needs and facing barriers to education and employment.



**Tim Lo Surdo**

Country: **Australia**

Area of Work: **SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities**

Tim is the founder of 'Democracy in Colour'; a racial and economic justice organisation created to tackle structural racism and address critical civic issues facing people of colour in Australia. The programme has grown a membership of over 57,000 people and engaged over 85,000 people in advocacy and capacity-building leadership training including young people, women, and persons with disabilities.





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## ADJUDICATION PANELS

The Final Pan Commonwealth Adjudication Panel was comprised of:

- HE Andreas S Kakouris, High Commissioner, High Commission of the Republic of Cyprus
- HE Rethabile Mahlompho Mokaeane, High Commissioner, High Commission of the Kingdom of Lesotho
- Janet Charles, Acting High Commissioner, High Commission for the Commonwealth of Dominica
- Rabia Kasuri, Counsellor, High Commission for the Islamic Republic of Pakistan
- Michael Walsh, Honorary Consul, Honorary Consulate for the Republic of Kiribati
- Roxanne M St Clair, Chairperson, Commonwealth Girls Education Fund
- Tijani Christian, Chairperson, Commonwealth Youth Council

Commonwealth Youth Award Coordinators

- Layne Robinson, Head, Social Policy Development Section
- Adanna Ehirim, Assistant Programme Officer, Social Policy Development Section
- Natricia Duncan, Communications and Engagement Officer, Social Policy Development Section



# PAN-COMMONWEALTH

## ADJUDICATION PANEL MEMBERS

|                                 |                           |                        |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Abena Dugan                     | Harry James               | Raywin Taroaniara      |
| Adeola Adesoba                  | Olikwailafa               | Roma Anne              |
| Ajani A. Lebourne               | Hilary Luna Enos-Edu      | Sashendranie Vedamuttu |
| Arnold Maliba                   | Irene Kendi               | Sachinda Dulanjana     |
| Aurelia Bruce                   | Jevanic Henry             | Sagufta Janif          |
| Bobby Siarani                   | Jonathan Andrews          | Sarika Kotoch          |
| Christian Achaleke              | Kakembo Brian Galabuzi    | Saurabh Mishra         |
| Christopher Seagateng           | Karuna Kumar              | Shivani Handa          |
| Dário Camal                     | Kendell Vincent           | Shomy Chowdhury        |
| Darrion M. Narine               | Krystle Reid Wijesuriya   | Sowmyan Jegatheesan    |
| Deborah Boakye                  | Kusala Fernando           | Srinkhala Rana         |
| Denise Graciela Lourenço Juvane | Lalita Gopaul             | Tamar Moss             |
| Diane Mushimiyimana             | Maria Vianca Jasmin Anglo | Tanuja Nailwal         |
| Elizabeth V Kite                | Marwan Umar Gwamba        | Tiffany Daniels-Bailey |
| Emma Beckles                    | Musarrat Maisha Reza      | Tukiya Kaunda-Mutupa   |
| Fahmida Faiza                   | Nancy Amunga              | Tumelo Qophe           |
| Franz Ernest Mario George       | Newton Onsongo Ondabu     | Uzoh Ifeanyichukwu     |
| Fsahat UI-Hassan                | Odayne Haughton           | Varatharaja Kumaraguru |
| Hafiz Usama Tanveer             | Paul Habineza             | Vivin Mathew           |
|                                 | Pearce Robinson           |                        |

# COMMONWEALTH YOUTH COVID-19 HEROES

## Vedika Agarwal (India)

Vedika is the founder of Yein Udaan, an NGO supporting marginalised families in rural Indian communities. During the lockdown, Yein Udaan has distributed food supplies worth over 216,000 meals, sanitation supplies to over 3000 families, educational kits to over 400 students and launched a virtual learning programme in six community libraries. They have also worked with doctors to tackle health misinformation.



## Bilal Amjad (Pakistan)

Bilal is the founder of InstaCare; which launched a response unit to provide free online medical consultations to communities in Pakistan during the pandemic. Currently, over 300 doctors have provided over 10,000 consultations through the platform. InstaCare also partnered with private institutions to provide telemedicine services to the public including universities and hospitals.



## Alexia Hilbertidou (New Zealand)

Alexia is the founder of GirlBoss New Zealand which empowers and equips young women to develop leadership and entrepreneurial skills. During the pandemic, Alexia launched GirlBoss Edge – a virtual career accelerator giving over 1000 women access to 1:1 leaders mentorship and career skills masterclasses, particularly Indigenous, Paska, low-income and rural women.



## Dr Isaac Olufadewa (Nigeria)

Isaac is the founder of Slum and Rural Health Initiative (SRHIN). The SRHIN COVID-19 Project has translated COVID-19 health messages from the World Health Organization into over 100 languages, reaching over 1.5 million people. Issac also launched an AI-driven app and chatbot offering thousands of young people access to comprehensive sexual and mental health information.



## Dr Camir Ricketts (Jamaica)

Camir is the founder of MindsOf Initiative; a programme which increases young people's access to career mentorship and S.T.E.A.M training opportunities. Camir co-launched an online app helping 100,000 people find their nearest COVID-19 testing sites, and raised \$4000 USD in funds to purchase devices and mobile data for students affected by the pandemic.



The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted all aspects of our lives in every part of the world. But despite the challenges, the Commonwealth's young people have stepped up to tackle this crisis head on. They have helped bring light and hope to those around them in the most sombre of times. For the first time, the Commonwealth Youth Awards will highlight 10 exceptional young people who have gone above and beyond to support their communities, and be a positive light during this pandemic. These are our Commonwealth Youth COVID-19 Heroes.

## Sukhmeet Singh Sachal (Canada)

Sukhmeet is a co-founder of Translations 4 Our Nations; an initiative which works with indigenous community members to create medically accurate and culturally-relevant COVID-19 information in indigenous languages. The programme has recruited over 140 indigenous translators to translate public health policy information into over 45 languages, reaching over 45,000 indigenous people.



## Momin Saqib (UK)

In March 2020, Momin launched 'One Million Meals'; an emergency response to the COVID-19 crisis. Led by volunteers, the programme has provided over 100,000 meals and beverages in over 200 locations to frontline key workers, NHS staff, homeless people and vulnerable families affected by the pandemic, including through 47 hospitals, trusts and food banks.



## Kritz and Bianca Sciesere (Australia)

Kritz and Bianca are founders of The Big Sister Experience; a social enterprise that provides online mentorship to empower young women and girls on life skills. During the pandemic, the programme has focused on face-to-face and online workshops to support over 5000 young girls dealing with isolation and as they return to on-campus learning.



## Brent Alexander Scotland (Antigua and Barbuda)

Brent is the president of the Halo Foundation Generation Y; a national youth body supporting and empowering young people. The Foundation funded monthly groceries for vulnerable persons, and provides a support network to elderly communities isolated during the pandemic. The foundation has also hosted youth events on character building, mental health and suicide awareness.



## Natalie Robi Tingo (Kenya)

Natalie is the founder of Msichana Empowerment Kuria; an organisation combating gender based violence and FGM, and empowering girls and women in Kenya. During the pandemic, the organisation set up a menstrual care bank to support girls in slum areas, and a community-based cash transfer programme to allow marginalised girls and young women access to funds and support.



# ABOUT THE COMMONWEALTH YOUTH PROGRAMME

The Commonwealth Youth Awards are sponsored and co-ordinated by the Commonwealth Youth Programme.

We engage and empower young people, provide thought leadership in youth development, and support governments, youth work professionals and young leaders to create policy and practice environments that help young people to fulfil their social, economic and political potential.

We encourage the effective participation of young women and men in development processes, and promote their engagement at all levels of decision-making, including with Heads of Government. We also showcase, celebrate and advance the capabilities and achievements of young people in driving democracy and development.

We place special emphasis on supporting youth-led initiatives, and giving young people a strong voice in decision-making processes. This includes convening youth forums at Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings and ministerial summits, as well as technical assistance and support for national, regional and global youth networks.

These youth networks include:

- Commonwealth Youth Council
- Commonwealth Students Association
- Commonwealth Youth Peace Ambassadors Network
- Commonwealth Youth Climate Change Network
- Commonwealth Youth Human Rights and Democracy Network
- Commonwealth Youth Health Network
- Commonwealth Alliance of Young Entrepreneurs
- Commonwealth Youth Gender Equality Network
- Commonwealth Youth Sport for Development and Peace Working Group
- Commonwealth Children and Youth Disability Network
- Commonwealth Correspondents
- Commonwealth CommonTies Youth Diaspora Network

# COMMONWEALTH YOUTH FORUM

This June, hundreds of young leaders from across the globe are expected to meet in Kigali, Rwanda at the Commonwealth Youth Forum (CYF). Under the theme “Taking Charge of our Future” the meeting will give participants the opportunity to build cross-cultural connections and networks, debate the challenges facing young people, and agree effective youth-led initiatives, particularly in light of the global challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic. Most importantly, the CYF will amplify the voices of young people, ensuring their ideas and perspectives influence decision makers at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) and shape youth development policies.

The Forum is held biennially in the run-up to CHOGM, when leaders from the 54-member bloc meet to reaffirm their common values, address shared global challenges and agree strategies to create a better future for their citizens.

Building on progress since CHOGM 2018 in London, young leaders will focus on five sub themes:

1. Governance and Rule of Law;
2. Sustainability;
3. Youth;
4. Health; and
5. Technology and Innovation

The CYF agenda is developed by an international taskforce, made up of young leaders from across the Commonwealth.

For more information on CYF and how to get involved, please contact: [cyf@commonwealth.int](mailto:cyf@commonwealth.int)









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