

# AlumniNews

## Africa Newsletter

### New Australia Awards in Africa program to focus on Alumni development and links

**Writer:** Emma Stone  
**Photography:** DFAT

As Australia Awards in Africa enters a new program phase, increasing professional development opportunities for Alumni and strengthening links between Australia and Africa will gain momentum

With more than 5,000 Alumni of Australian Government-funded scholarships in Africa, Australia Awards has established an influential network of leaders, reformers and development advocates across Africa. The Alumni network provides ample opportunity for continued capacity and relationship building through tailored professional development opportunities and creating the space and platform for Australia-Africa engagement across sectors.

Evidence collected through the current program shows that Alumni are making contributions to development on return. The 2015 Outcomes Study found that 98% of Alumni attributed their contributions to Award-acquired skills. This result shows that pursuing the development of Africa's professionals through higher education is making an impact. The new program will place a premium on further developing Alumni professional skills and capacity and will for the first time incorporate Alumni who have participated in other Australian government funded programs as well as those who have self-funded their studies.

In November 2015, a survey assessing the continuing professional development (CPD) needs of Australia Awards Alumni was carried out. Over 1000 Alumni responded. Alumni expressed interest in more training on community needs assessment which speaks directly to the use of capacity building not just for employment advancement but even more importantly, for making a sustainable impact on their communities. We also noted the need for proposal writing training (over 60% of Alumni responded positively to this). In response, the Private Sector Engagement workshop held on

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29 February in Lagos included a component on grant proposal writing. This content was also made available to the wider Alumni body through the Australia Awards website.

The 2015 Outcomes Study found that soft skills such as project management, leadership, public speaking, change management and networking were viewed as significant skills gained while on-Award – these will continue to be honed through a variety of skills development activities and tools. Additional resources already have been allocated to support leadership activities such as the Effective Leadership workshop in Lusaka and the Women in Leadership Network event in Nairobi which took place in February and March 2016.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) finds the contributions and guidance from Alumni in partnering with Africa invaluable and will continue to solicit Alumni inputs as possible, especially where it feeds back into the Australia Awards program.

Australia Awards Alumni are not only talented in their fields of operation but are also connected professionals who are at the helm of driving development nationally and regionally. A growing number of Alumni are in senior positions in the public sector, private sector, regional organisations and civil society. DFAT realises that Australia's partnership with African countries is enhanced by Australia Awards Alumni contributions and their positive relationships with Australia.

The 2015 Outcomes Study survey targeted Alumni from the 22 priority countries for Australia Awards in Africa who were at 12 to 18 months and 24 to 30 months following completion. A total of 133 Alumni responded to the survey from both cohorts - of these 39% were women.

#### Contribution to development outcomes

Alumni are making development contributions, with almost a third leading a development initiative and the remaining very active in contributing to development as part of multidisciplinary teams. The results showed that the sector of study has a significant bearing on the type of contribution made. For example Alumni that had studied a public policy related course were more likely to contribute in the area of policy - more than half (58%) of the policy related contributions were from respondents who studied a public policy or governance related course. While respondents that studied an Agriculture or Health related course were highly likely to contribute to skills transfer.

#### Employment and promotion at work

Most Alumni were employed at the time of the study; of the 123 who responded to the question on employment, only six were not employed at the time of the survey. Alumni are also being promoted on returning from the award with nearly half of the respondents (44%) having received a promotion. The study further sought to assess the level of impact of Alumni contributions; the majority of the contributions are benefiting society at large with only a fifth working toward change solely at organisational level. Alumni roles in these contributions also varied from being; "Leader", "Active" and "Passive". Interestingly 33% of those that responded have played a leadership role in their stated development contribution, 46% were identified as being active (highly participative) in the contribution, whereas 21% were classified as being passive or occasional in their efforts to achieve development contribution. Alumni are also using the skills and knowledge from their award to promote gender equality in their workplaces.

Alumni networks, across Africa, have already helped to promote valuable links between Australia and Africa through research, policy development and workforce exchanges, which have contributed to relationship building between people and organisations, increasing ties and strengthening cooperation between Australia and Africa. Alumni Associations play a vital role in connecting Alumni with one another, delivering professional networking and in promoting the Awards to prospective high calibre applicants.

The new program will therefore foster links between government, civil society and the private sector, allowing space for men and women to share knowledge across borders, learn from the experience of their African peers and co-create solutions to critical development challenges; links expand the benefits of the

#### Skills transfer and workplace support

The most common forms of skills transfer among Alumni were management, leadership and technical skills. Skills transfer happened formally and informally. The rate of transfer is slightly higher in all areas for informal training than for formal training. The study found that workplaces are generally supportive for Alumni to apply knowledge and skills; over half of the respondents identified support from supervisors as being the main enabler for Alumni to use award acquired skills.

#### Creating and maintaining links

Alumni are expected to create and maintain people-to-people and institutional links between Africa and Australia; the study found that most Alumni (79%) were keeping in contact occasionally or regularly with Alumni from their home country and international students (75%). However, links with former institutions in Australia and professional relationships with Australian organisations were underdeveloped.

#### Small grants scheme

The outcomes study further assesses the development outcomes of the Small Grants Scheme. Small Grants projects are achieving outstanding results with potential for long-term benefits. Some of the projects reviewed include a project on research into processing ripe/over-ripe bananas in Mauritius, where two trained agro-industrialists have adopted the puree production protocol and technology for bulk preparation and storage and are commercialising banana puree; and a project on sensitisation of artisanal miners on the need of rehabilitating mining sites in Cameroon.

#### Long term impact

The 2015 outcomes study also concluded the longitudinal study that was started in 2013 with 14 sampled Alumni, followed up at three intervals over a period of two years. The longitudinal study found that Alumni have been able to use their Award acquired skills and knowledge over a period of time and this has enabled Alumni

Awards to institutions not just individuals. As the new program refines its approach to partnering with African countries to achieve equitable access to the benefits of economic growth, emphasis will be placed on links with institutions, companies and individuals working in agriculture, extractives and public policy.

The next four years present a good opportunity to raise the bar of the sustainability and development outcomes of the program as approximately 1200 mid to senior level professionals from a range of African countries will receive a Masters level education or short course training delivered by Australian universities. We are hopeful that they too will join the ranks of Alumni using their skills, knowledge, networks and positive links with Australia to contribute to economic growth on the African continent.

to contribute to development initiatives. The longitudinal study showed that Alumni were experiencing career progression after return from Award; five Alumni showed evidence of progression through a promotion and the rest had taken on more work responsibility. Highlights of the Alumni contributions included;

- Godfrey Musonda: Established a large scale forest nursery to progress afforestation and reforestation in Zambia – created employment for 652 people
- Moses Bayinga: Trained 40 farmers in Tanzania on Post-harvest management leading to improved post-harvest techniques
- Gertrude Sililo: trained 30 officers at Rundu Vocational Training Centre, Namibia on the use of Lesson Planning for effective TVET teaching

★ / Godfrey Musonda, Forestry Department, Zambia Ministry of Lands, Natural Resources and Environmental Protection



## 2015 Outcomes Study results show the long term developmental impact of Australia Awards Alumni

Writer: Ngonidzashé Chipato

Photography: DFAT

The annual outcomes study aims to measure and assess program results by identifying development contributions made by Australia Awards Alumni in the program's priority countries. The 2015 study shows that Alumni are actively contributing to the development of their countries up to two and a half years after completing their Award.



# Cultivating Effective Leaders in Development

**Writer:** Yvonne Chimutimbira  
**Photography:** DFAT

One of the overarching goals of the Australia Awards program in Africa is to develop the leadership capacity of Award recipients so that they can contribute to development in their home countries. Through their Work Plan on Return, Awardees have either shown their ability or potential to take up leadership roles. Going on Award therefore provides the skills and knowledge that will give them the credibility, authority and capability to mobilise people and resources and to forge relevant partnerships to pursue development goals effectively.

With the goal of enhancing Alumni leadership, Australia Awards organised a two day capacity building workshop titled Effective Leadership: Cultivating Effective Leaders in Development, on the 25th and 26th February 2016 at the Southern Sun Ridgeway in Lusaka, Zambia. The workshop brought together 31 Alumni from 15 African countries in leadership positions to brainstorm and discuss ways in which they could successfully fulfil their roles as leaders and consequently drive sustainable change in their organisations and countries. The workshop also provided opportunities for valuable skilling, networking and relationship-building.

The sessions began with consensus around the definition of leadership (“a special case of interpersonal influence that gets an individual or group to do what the leader wants done”) and a discussion on the difference between management and leadership, exemplary leadership, and approaches to leadership. Alumni were engaged in an interactive process of individual experience sharing and group discussions where they were challenged to extend their role as leaders in their own sphere of influence in spite of the many challenges facing leaders on the African continent.

At the end of the workshop Alumni left with a draft action plan which specified actions designed to achieve one key result to enhance their capability as leaders and to achieve a direct and specific actionable commitment. The participants agreed that Alumni could play a leadership role in influencing outcomes in their current workplaces.

Eric Filor Nagbe a Liberian Alumnus said the workshop provided applicable lessons and solutions. “I learnt that the leadership issues we have in Liberia are not only common to our country but all African countries.”

Zambia Alumni Association Chair, Royd Katongo also weighed in on the importance of Alumni professional development activities during his opening remarks. “We find such capacity building programmes and networking very enriching. We live in a dynamic environment with opportunities and challenges. As such capacity building becomes inevitable if we are to remain relevant and be of influence.”

On the second day of the workshop the 2016 Masters Award recipients from Zambia and Malawi who were attending a pre-departure workshop at the same venue, were matched with Alumni to share experiences of living and studying in Australia. Some new Awardees had the opportunity to talk to Alumni who attended the same universities that they will experience soon.

To mark the end of the workshop, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Harare organised a networking cocktail which was attended by workshop Alumni, members of the Zambia Australia Alumni Association, Zambia official delegates, and the 2016 Malawi and Zambia Awardees. Addressing Alumni and the Awardees at the cocktail, Australian High Commissioner to Zambia and Malawi, Suzanne McCourt emphasised the importance of effective leadership to the success of the Awards program, “Australia Awards recipients are selected because they are identified as leaders of change in spheres of influence and I hope that you will continue to contribute to the development of your respective countries”.

**More information: Scan here for workshop presentation**



★ / Participants at the Effective leadership workshop



# Making scientific research accessible to Mauritians

**Writer:** DC Jacobs  
**Photography:** DFAT & Café Scientifique Maurice

**Nitin Rughoonauth, a graduate of the University of Melbourne has used his passion for science and his quest to make research accessible to the public to contribute to developing science and technology awareness in Mauritius through Café Scientifique.**

In contrast with popular perceptions which associate Mauritius solely with island style holidays, Mauritian President, Dr Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, a scientist and entrepreneur, pledged with her appointment in 2015 to export the island’s research capabilities and promote their notable outputs in the areas of science and technology. Since then the Mauritian government announced that through a range of initiatives the country will be developed into a Centre for Higher Learning and Excellence and a regional knowledge hub.

Already, the first technology park in the Indian Ocean region, BioPark Mauritius, was opened last year - a public-private partnership fostering innovative companies as well as talented researchers and professionals, to create the conditions to help Mauritius achieve its transition from manufacturing to a more intelligent economy. Mauritius will also be taking part in phase two of the Square Kilometre Array Project (SKA), an international project that aims to build the world’s biggest Radio Telescope on project sites shared between Australia and Africa.

Against this background, University of Melbourne Alumnus, Nitin Rughoonauth has made it his mission to contribute to Science education in Mauritius. Nitin obtained a BSc (Hons) in Mathematics, Statistics and Physics in 2005 through an international scholarship from the University of Melbourne, and later completed his PhD in Applied Mathematics at the University of Cape Town in South Africa. Nitin is thankful for his undergraduate studies in Australia which gave him international exposure to his field and is immensely proud of being an Alumnus of the University of Melbourne. During his long term academic development over 12 years Nitin also studied in France and Germany for shorter periods.

Following his return to Mauritius, Nitin and his colleague and friend, Kamlesh Dookayka founded Café Scientifique Maurice in December 2014. Café Scientifique is a grassroots public science outreach initiative that runs in many cities and countries around the world. The philosophy behind Café Scientifique is that science and its methods should be accessible to all citizens. Nitin and Kamlesh whose backgrounds are in experimental astro-particle physics and mathematics decided to launch the Mauritian chapter to offer opportunities to the general public to interact with research scientists in an informal, non-academic and friendly social setting. “The aim of the initiative is to provide a platform to bring science out of the lab and the ivory tower of academia to the general public”, explains Nitin.

One afternoon a month they invite a wide-ranging audience from retirees to school children, to a local café to listen to and network with science experts who discuss their research in a way that non-scientists can understand. These discussions are often topical and can frequently stimulate debate around some controversial subjects. To Nitin the important aspect is that the right setting and conditions create a relaxed environment conducive to learning and vibrant debates.

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★ / Nitin Rughoonauth, Founder of Café Scientifique Maurice and intern at Mauritian Ministry of Education & Human Resources, Tertiary Education & Scientific Research





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★ / Café Scientifique Maurice Event



“Our aim is to ignite and fuel a sustained conversation between the experts and society at large at a level that leads to improved understanding and a better appreciation of one’s place in the world,” Nitin explains. The international exposure Nitin gained through studying in Australia has enabled him to create and maintain links that keep him on par with happenings in the scientific world as well as being in contact with scientists who may visit Mauritius.

Nitin and Kamlesh have organised six Café Scientifique events since 2014 and hosted scientists and experts in astrophysics, astrobiology, cosmology, evolutionary anthropology, and geo-localisation from Mauritius or abroad. These events were held in three different venues across the island and have attracted between 40-50 participants each - evidence that Mauritians are indeed interested in learning more about science. According to Nitin, the audience determines the success of each event. “The existence and success of the initiative depends critically on the participation of the public, and we believe that we have successfully taken the first steps in setting up this platform in Mauritius”.

Ploughing back into the community through science talks at Café Scientifique happens in Nitin’s spare time as he works full-time for the Mauritian Ministry of Education & Human Resources, Tertiary Education & Scientific Research. Café Scientifique Maurice is therefore dependent on the generous support of some venue managers and staff who volunteer, host and assist with organising the events free of charge to the public. One such volunteer is Silvano de Gennaro, who is now retired, but has previously worked for more than three decades in the computer department at CERN (the European Organisation for Nuclear Research). He records the talks hosted by Café Scientifique Maurice and uploads them to YouTube making the talks and discussions available to a much wider audience. Nitin and Kamlesh are now exploring setting up the Café Scientifique Maurice as an official non-government organisation (NGO) which will make it easier to explore financial support in order to expand the initiative.

More information is available on the Café Scientifique Maurice Facebook page.

## Going beyond emergency HIV response: Australia Awards Alumna contributes to Zambia’s transforming public health sector

**Writer:** Mpongwe Ndebele Shawa & Otae Mkandawire  
**Photography:** CIDRZ

★ / Mpongwe Ndebele Shawa,  
Centre for Infectious Disease Research in Zambia



It has been more than 20 years since Mpongwe Ndebele Shawa completed a Masters in Business Administration at Curtin University in Perth, yet she says her studies in Australia still have a significant impact on her current role as Program Manager for the HIV Integration into Local Ownership (HILO) program run by the Centre for Infectious Disease Research in Zambia (CIDRZ). “Learning how to develop strategic plans, budget effectively, collect data, manage information analysis, reporting and dissemination through my Business Administration and Management degree at Curtin University has enabled me to effectively manage and guide the implementation of a health program with many facets.”

Mpongwe’s Masters, and subsequent professional development courses in various aspects of management, monitoring and evaluation and effective leadership, has allowed her to contribute to building local capacity in the public health sector - a critical area of her country’s development agenda over the last two decades. Though HIV/AIDS and related diseases are still the leading cause of death in Zambia, there was a 60% reduction in HIV deaths between 2005 and 2013 and the rate of new HIV infections decreased by 41% between 2009 and 2013. With the decline in infections, the Zambian government is now focusing on integrating HIV care and treatment into a more holistic healthcare system that goes beyond an emergency response. Mpongwe clarifies that the HILO program is aligned to support Zambia’s strategic response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. “Our longstanding engagement with local communities and their health systems enable us to support Zambian priorities efficiently, holistically and respectfully. Partnering with the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Community Development Mother and Child Health, we integrate HIV programs into primary healthcare settings.”

Mpongwe explains that Zambia’s rapid scale-up of HIV prevention, care and treatment services has been among the most successful programs in Africa and CIDRZ has been privileged to serve as a key technical and implementing partner in this response. By June 2014, over 400,000 Zambian men, women and children in 336 CIDRZ supported clinics were enrolled in long-term HIV Anti Retroviral Treatment (ART) care. “Significant progress has been made in the fight to tackle HIV and we are now within reach of an AIDS-free generation: access to life-saving ART has been expanded, new infections are being averted, and decline in life expectancy has begun to reverse. In light of these advances, the HILO Program has shifted focus from an emergency scale-up of HIV services towards a more comprehensive approach of health service delivery by building a well-trained and healthy workforce that functions within a well-supplied and sustainable healthcare system that is Zambia-owned and Zambia-driven.”

In collaboration with the program team, Mpongwe’s core responsibilities involve providing administrative and management oversight of HILO projects, allowing for smooth implementation and coordination of work efforts by project teams to achieve program outputs and targets in a timely manner. “I spearhead the identification of annual operational initiatives under each HILO

project and prepare the program budget and operational work plans, guide program implementation, data collection and progress reporting.” Her business knowledge gained through her MBA comes to the fore when ensuring that program objectives meet donor requirements. “As Program Manager I am responsible for the strategic and operational planning of the program. This also involves attending to relationship management and meeting the terms and conditions of collaborative agreements.”

The HILO program mainly supports health facilities in four provinces of Zambia and aims to ensure that Zambian nationals are availed quality public health care in a non-discriminatory environment, wherever they may be based. The results have led to the program being seen as a practical model within the sector that allows local benefit and ownership. “Our work in the Zambian health sector has proved it is possible to treat large numbers of people for HIV successfully in areas with weaker health systems. The program’s approaches have been admired and replicated by other partners working in the area of HIV/AIDS management,” Mpongwe says.

For Mpongwe, being part of an organization that is involved in improving every day health and conducting cutting-edge research to improve programs is a unique opportunity. “CIDRZ is at the bedside, in the community, on the motorcycle, in the lab pipetting samples, at the computer working on spreadsheets for public health planning, dealing with systems issues and broader implementation policies, in classrooms training the emerging healthcare workforce, and in the District, Provincial and Ministry offices collaborating with and supporting government colleagues.”

A crucial aspect of Australia Awards is creating the capacity for Alumni to become change agents - transforming their organisations and sectors by taking on leadership roles, building technical capacity and knowledge sharing. The results of the HILO project are reflective of Mpongwe’s impact on her organization and on the Zambian public health system. “The qualification I got from Curtin University has surely enabled me to play a catalytic role in ensuring that I manage the program and resources entrusted to us in the most responsible fashion whilst achieving the desired results.”

### Key results achieved

- Improved the infrastructure in the ART (anti-retroviral treatment) clinics
- Built a well-trained and healthy workforce
- Created a well-supplied and sustainable healthcare system that is Zambia-owned and Zambia-driven
- Expanded and strengthened the quality of local health services for all Zambians
- Supported and strengthened data collection
- Enhanced record-keeping and forecasting of the national supply chain so that pharmacies remain stocked
- Ensured clinics get the supplies they need and laboratories have the tools required to conduct testing for all clients in the public sector.



## Setting the scene for Catalytic Partnerships – Alumni workshop in Lagos explores private sector engagement in development

**Writer:** Hazel Zaranyika  
**Photography:** CIDRZ

Alumni from Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Seychelles, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe attended the Private Sector Engagement workshop in Lagos, Nigeria from 29 February to 1 March. The main purpose of the workshop was for Alumni to explore how the Australia Awards program can embrace the Australian government's vision of partnering with the private sector to achieve sustainable development outcomes and subsequently draw up draft strategies for this engagement.

Reaching out to Alumni who already work with private sector partnerships, is an important mechanism to obtain Alumni input into the private sector engagement component of the new Australia Awards in Africa program (2016 – 2020) which came into effect on 1 April 2016. The new program also makes provision for a Private Sector Engagement (PSE) pilot activity which is to include both financial and non-financial partnerships.

On completion of the workshop, there was general agreement among the Alumni delegates that they can and would like to play a role in any future private sector engagement strategy and implementation. Some of the roles which Alumni see for themselves include reviews and inputs into the PSE strategy; advocacy and communication about such a strategy to potential partners and stakeholders; data collection and analysis; improving the database of Alumni already engaged with the private sector; setting up an Alumni PSE advisory committee; and implementing a future PSE strategy. Additional areas where Alumni could provide valuable inputs are with training and mentoring fellow Alumni on PSE.

Alumni were also trained on successful grant proposal writing and learned more about the Business Partnership Platform (BPP), a Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade grant initiative to promote private sector initiatives in the region. Guidelines on grant proposal writing discussed during the workshop are currently available on the Alumni section of the Australia Awards in Africa website for all Alumni to consult.

★ / Participants at the Private Sector Engagement workshop in Lagos



Through an opening address read to participants, the High Commissioner of Australia to Nigeria, HE Mr Paul Lehmann encouraged Alumni as key drivers of development in their countries to engage fully with the private sector, "This workshop will provide the basis for an Australia Awards Alumni Private Sector Engagement Strategy. Such a strategy will enhance how DFAT, Australia Awards and Alumni work together to better engage the private sector to achieve our mutual development objectives".

Mr Gordon Chakaodza from the Australian Trade and Investment Commission (Austrade) intimated that there were prospects for Alumni to engage and partner with Austrade's activities in expanding business opportunities in Africa. Value-chain development expert, Collins Apuoyo, emphasised the importance of shared interest value propositions in private sector engagement drawing on key examples from pro poor development initiatives in Nigeria.

Alumni at the workshop considered themselves, a significant vehicle for private sector engagement in the Awards program through their diverse cultures, disciplines, strengths and expertise. "We looked at the role Alumni can play and it starts with inputs to the strategy. We have gone to Australia, come back after having been trained and have become a resource so it is important to deploy and utilise those skills," said Dr Zainab Muhammad Idris during a group feedback session.

According to Ms. Fortune Kachidza, an Alumna from Zimbabwe, the workshop was significant, not only to her career, but broadly for her workplace. "The move which the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is taking aligns with that of my career and organisation. I will take the learnings from this workshop back to my workplace".

**More information: Scan here for Grant Proposal Writing Guidelines**



## Reshaping the human resource development landscape in Seychelles

**Writer:** Margaret Pillay & Otae Mkandawire  
**Photography:** DFAT

From English teacher to redrafting the Seychelles Human Resource Development Act, former CEO of the Seychelles Agency for National Human Resource Development credits her Award-gained communication and negotiation skills for making a lasting impact on the Seychelles education sector.

In view of the escalating cost of tertiary education and the country's need for qualified human resources to fill the skills gaps in various sectors of the local labour market, over the past seven years the Seychelles government has been implementing changes to the higher education and human resource development sector – starting with the establishment of the University of Seychelles in 2009 and the revision of the Human Resource Development Act in 2012 which instituted the Seychelles Agency for National Human Resource Development (ANHRD) and a revision of the Government of Seychelles Scholarship Scheme to enhance its cost effectiveness and efficiency.

★ / Margaret Pillay, International School Seychelles (former CEO at the Agency for National Human Resource Development, Seychelles)





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Former ANHRD Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Margaret Pillay was a newly qualified teacher when she left the Seychelles to undertake a Bachelor of Arts in English at the Edith Cowan University in Perth, Australia. Apart from her core English language units, Margaret also took some modules in education and social sciences. "The degree allowed me to develop major skills such as critical thinking, critical literacy; research, academic, transactional and creative writing."

Upon completing her degree in 1999, she rejoined the public education sector in Seychelles and worked as an English teacher within the secondary school system. However, the broad scope of her Australian government scholarship allowed her to move from secondary teaching to adult education and learning, which included teacher training, soft skills development, leadership training and tutoring and lecturing on University programmes. In 2012, after thirteen years in the education sector, Margaret was appointed as the CEO of the then National Human Resources Development Council in Seychelles.

Under Margaret's direction, the council was restructured and realigned to become an agency, responsible for coordinating and managing human resource development at the national level. "When I took over office in 2012, many of the Council's functions had become obsolete while others were being discharged without authority under the Human Resources Development (HRD) Act. Further to that, there had been administrative reforms in Government that necessitated a realignment of the Council with the new administrative structures. Restructuring the council therefore meant repealing the existing HRD Act and the enactment of a new one."

Reviewing and restructuring the Council involved Margaret leading a team including members from the Attorney General's office, senior staff of the Council, adhoc members from the Department of Administration and the national reforms body. The first step was gaining a deep understanding of the human resources development (HRD) landscape in Seychelles and comparing that to other countries with similar HRD challenges such as Mauritius and Botswana. "I wanted to understand what kind of structures were in place in other countries in order to discharge similar functions to ours," Margaret explains.

In the course of revamping the Council, Margaret employed numerous skills that she had developed during the course of her studies in Australia as well as through living in Australia itself. "Having moved from the education field to the HR field, it also was necessary for me to use my critical reading skills to quickly assimilate the scope of the subject matter. This involved researching and engaging with stakeholders both locally and overseas as well as learning from my staff. "The art of listening and communication came in really handy in order to engage people, and gain their trust which then allowed them to share their expertise and thoughts with me.

The overseas stakeholders also needed to feel that it was a two way street where my interaction with them would also allow for growth opportunities for them. My ability to communicate with them was priceless."

As work on the Act continued with her review committee and later on with the Minister responsible for Human Resources Development, her negotiation skills became essential. "I needed to provide them with reliable information, clarify their doubts and negotiate with them on points of contention so that in the end we would all have a safeguarded piece of legislation that was appropriate for our context."

Once the ground work of reviewing the functions of the Council was complete and aligned with new government structures, there was a need to put all the changes in new legislation to present to the National Assembly. Margaret was then engaged in preparing the Minister to present the new Bill to the National Assembly. "I needed to clarify all of the minister's queries so she would feel confident to present and defend the Bill. This meant being well versed with the Bill, the HR context in Seychelles, and regional and international best practice."

After the Bill was passed and the new HRD Act was published, Margaret was then involved in media communication to explain the Act to the public as well as other stakeholders. Internal communication to educate the staff on the new functions of the Agency was also carried out. This was followed by a restructuring of the organisation to ensure that employees were fully engaged in discharging their functions. "Parallel to working on the restructuring of the Council, I was also leading the development of the Strategic Plan to ensure that staff worked towards the right targets under the new status. There was a lot of self-directed learning - another skill which was sharpened during my university degree in Australia."

Steered by Margaret, the process of restructuring the Council to the new status of Agency has reshaped the human resource landscape in Seychelles by greatly improving the management of the Government of Seychelles Scholarship Scheme and the effectiveness of career promotion initiatives for prospective students. The ANHRD reports an increased interest from parents and private entities to contribute financially to the tertiary education of their children or employees; and a 6% increase in the number of graduates since 2010. (1) ANHRD 2013 "Through the Ministry of Education, teachers, students and parents benefited from the support and information that the Agency provided for career promotion which resulted in an increase in the number of students attending universities both in Seychelles and overseas. The private sector as well became more engaged in supporting the scholarship programme. On the whole there was greater public awareness of the role of the Agency, the human resource development landscape in Seychelles and education opportunities," Margaret reflects.

Margaret Pillay is now the principal of the International School Seychelles which has over 700 students from 30 countries.

# Educating vulnerable children and creating income opportunities for female headed households through local partnerships and links with Australia

**Writer:** James Asiimwe

**Photography:** DFAT

\*/ New-born piglets at a KAVC sponsored piggery (KAVC)



During his Master of International Development studies at the University of Canberra, Australia Awards Alumnus James Asiimwe from Uganda started two development projects through his organisation, KAVC Foundation. One is a piggery project that provides one woman with one pregnant pig. When the pig breeds, she is able to sell a few pigs to generate income and keep a few to continue growing the piggery. She also keeps one pig to pass on to another woman, that way the project impact multiplies. The second project is a children's education centre, which provides primary education to orphans and vulnerable children who would otherwise not go to school or even have a meal or shelter.

Both projects are based in Wabiynja village, Wakiso District in Uganda. The projects are supported by a range of donors – including several that have come on board as a result of links James created during his stay in Australia. James tells us about the impact the two projects have made...

## The Piggery Project

While doing my masters, I studied two units - Designing and planning international development projects and Monitoring and evaluating international development projects - that helped me to design the piggery project for vulnerable female-headed households in Uganda. I also successfully applied for and received funding from Opportunity 2 Do, a fundraising NGO in Canberra, Australia. I specifically designed the piggery project to benefit women because I felt so touched when I studied Gender and Development and realised all the injustices women have and continue to go through. The project is designed to promote women's economic empowerment and once women access income from pig sales, they can meet most of their domestic needs. They can send their children to school and meet medical bills which promotes maternal health. The project contributes heavily to poverty eradication amongst marginalised women.



Although the funding from Opportunity 2 Do was a once-off funding, the piggery project is expected to continue until conditions for all marginalised women change in our project area. Using the knowledge I acquired from my degree, I have continued to monitor and evaluate this project. So far, the project has been associated with some important results that have far-reaching benefits for the community including: women meeting their domestic needs without begging from men; reduced cases of domestic violence and peaceful means of settling disputes due to the empowerment of women and improved nutrition as backyard gardens have been established in conjunction with pig farms. The project has also contributed to widespread tree planting encouraged to protect the piggery area – in the short term it provides much needed shade during hot spells but in the long term it will contribute to maintaining an ecological balance in the area.

**The Education Program**

The education program for vulnerable children also started in 2013 due to the influence of my master’s degree. I had an extensive discussion with my classmates who were part of the HIV/AIDS and Development course and discovered that indeed the pandemic has killed many parents. Many children who are orphaned have dropped out of school and become street kids; they cannot afford to attend school because they lack scholastic requirements. It was from here that the vision of building schools for orphans came to me. I called my wife Miriam in Uganda to share my vision with her and together we started a school for orphans and vulnerable children.

Given Miriam’s strong experience in education and also working with children in NGOs, she quickly started a school which was built and roofed with papyrus. She recruited 40 orphans and vulnerable children and I started supporting their education using my savings. We have since then reached 101 children who are being educated at KAVC Foundation Children’s Centre. Our plan now is to recruit and support 30 vulnerable children every year as we continue to build schools for them. Meanwhile, we also support an additional 13 vulnerable girls at secondary level of education. Although we do not have stable funding for this education project, the knowledge I acquired from my degree and the networks I made in Australia have continued to make it possible. For example, one Australian family recently supplied full sets of school uniforms to 40 children.

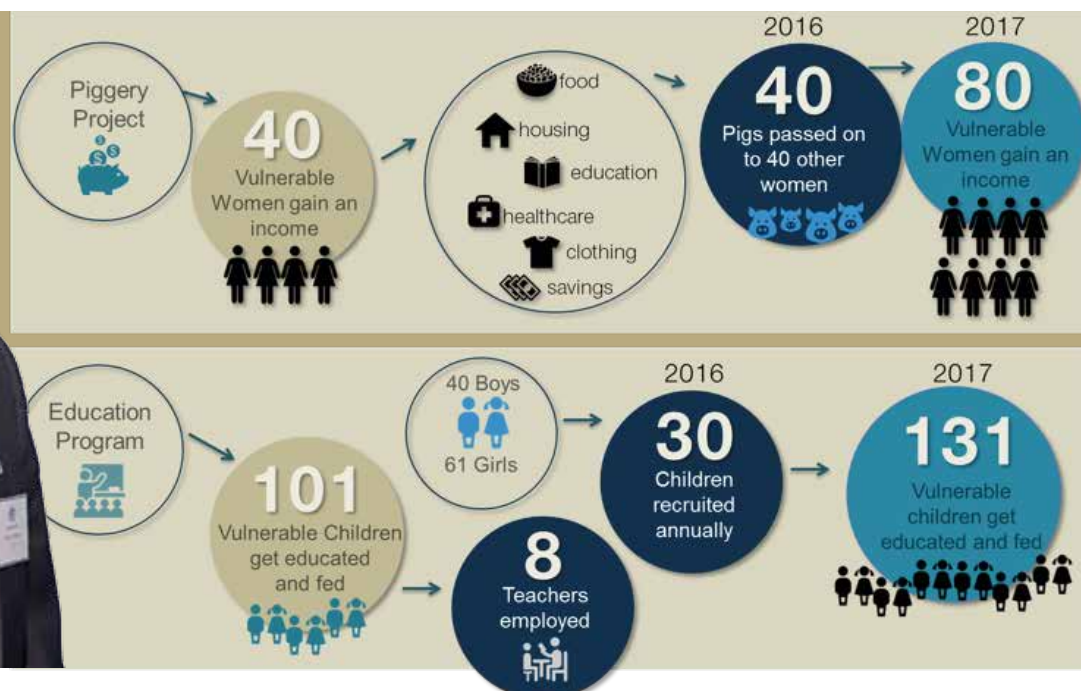
**Partnerships**

Local partnerships have also been integral to the success of the foundation. We involved beneficiaries in the project design and implementation - the women and children who we are assisting play a big part. Apart from our donors, we also included representatives and volunteers from community-based organisations. We also involved local government officials and for the education program went to district and central government officials to get their contribution and buy-in.

The piggery project and education program are very important because as they expand, they will contribute to my country achieving several sustainable development goals – reducing poverty, gender equality, quality education, creating sustainable communities and partnerships. So going to Australia for my studies was not only an asset to me but to the entire community I serve.

★ / James Asimwe, Founder and Managing Director, KAVC Foundation (DFAT)

**Key results by the KAVC Foundation**



# Australia Awards African Women in Leadership Network tackles gender inequality in the workplace and communities

**Writer:** Otae Mkandawire  
**Photography:** DFAT

For many women in the developing world, attaining any form of education is priceless, more so in Sub-Saharan Africa where an estimated 9.5 million girls will never step foot in school – twice as many girls as boys. Women who have obtained a post-graduate qualification find themselves at an advantage, with the potential and power through their expertise to become change-agents. However, gender inequality does not dissolve on attainment of knowledge and skills: it often continues in the workplace and communities.

Participants at the 2016 Australia Awards African Women in Leadership Network Alumni (WILN) workshop held in Nairobi on 10 and 11 March to mark International Women’s Day, spent time discussing gender equality at work and their leadership experiences under the theme: “Moving Forward: African Women as Self and Workplace Leaders”.

Made up of 32 Australia Awards Alumnae representing 14 African countries, the group of women primarily work in male-dominated fields critical to their countries’ development, such as agriculture, mining and international trade. Women described their struggle of being heard and acknowledged for the knowledge and experience they offer. Approaching a community led by men as a woman was a challenge as male leaders often saw them as disrupting cultural norms. Furthermore asking to hear the views of women in the community was often met with resistance. In addition, the patriarchy common in many political and socio-economic systems also filtered down to the workings of their own organisations, even to the extent of influencing organisational policies that exclude women. The WILN therefore agreed to support each other to be catalysts for inclusion in their families, communities and organisations.

The Alumnae collectively developed a strategy that would make the WILN more effective and contribute to increased opportunities for women to collectively engage as change agents in addressing development issues in their different countries within the ambit of the Australia Awards program but also in their individual capacities and through their workplaces. The group agreed that solidifying and expanding the mentoring initiative of the network was a first step; each WILN member would be tasked with mentoring two women at their workplace or in their community.

While there were differing approaches to ensuring that women are not disadvantaged in the workplace and communities, there was clear agreement that intensified action corporately and individually, by both men and women, towards women’s empowerment and genuine gender equality, is what African workplaces and indeed workplaces the world over critically need.

The African Women in Leadership Network is a forum bringing together Australia Awards Alumnae Funded by the Australian Government, the forum was launched in 2013 by Her Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of Liberia. It aims to develop and leverage Alumnae as change agents in their countries. The Network connects past and present female Awardees, providing leadership and mentoring opportunities for women participating in the program.

**Join**

Membership to the African Women in Leadership Network is open to all Australia Awards/Australian Development Scholarships (ADS) African Alumnae and registration is open all year round. To learn more about this opportunity, and to register go to: <http://www.australiaawardsafrica.org/africa-women-in-leadership/>

**More information: Scan here to register**



★ / African Women in Leadership Network workshop participants with Australian High Commissioner to Kenya, HE John Feakes and Kenyan First Lady, HE Margaret Kenyatta





# Australia Awards Alumnae spearheading nutrition sensitive agriculture and value chains

**Writer:** Otae Mkandawire  
**Photography:** DFAT

On opposite sides of the African continent, two Australia Awards Alumnae from Ghana and Kenya are using their Award-gained knowledge to tackle micro-nutrient deficiency in children and mothers while contributing to food security and the building of productive value chains for small farmers and entrepreneurs.



★ Mildred Suglo, National Directorate of Women in Agricultural Development (WIAD), Ghana Ministry of Food and Agriculture (DFAT)



★ Romana Mbinya, Kenya Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries (DFAT)

According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation, malnutrition contributes significantly to child mortality and accounts for either underweight or stunted growth among 33% of children in developing countries. By awarding Masters Scholarships and short courses in agriculture, the Australian government is partnering with African countries to increase the production of crops that will reduce malnutrition while contributing to economic development through increased agribusiness opportunities.

One such crop is orange flesh sweet potato which contains high levels of beta-carotene (Vitamin A) and grows well in semi-arid climates. Vitamin A is essential for the functioning of the human immune system. It also helps increase resistance to disease and protects against blindness. According to the World Health Organisation, Vitamin A deficiency is the leading cause of preventable blindness among young children and night blindness among pregnant women.

Australia Awards Alumnae, Mildred Songbanyere Suglo from Ghana and Romana Mbinya from Kenya, both agricultural officers, are promoting the cultivation and consumption of Orange Flesh Sweet Potato (OFSP) to increase Vitamin A in the diets of expectant mothers and young children.

Mildred graduated from the University of Canberra with a Masters in Nutrition in 2012 and works as an Agriculture Officer at the National Directorate of Women in Agricultural Development (WIAD) within Ghana's Ministry of Food and Agriculture. On return from her studies in Australia, Mildred joined a project that promotes OFSP production and consumption in Ghana. "My studies in Australia furnished me with knowledge on the interaction between food, health and environment in relation to addressing malnutrition." Mildred explains that the micro-nutrient enriched sweet potatoes are one of the crops targeted by the Ghanaian government for food security and for eliminating high (\* 75.8 %) vitamin A deficiency among children under five years. "The Ministry of Food and Agriculture in its Agriculture Sector Investment Plan (2011-2015) acknowledges that the ultimate goal of food production and consumption is adequate nutrition. Thus agriculture is essential for improved nutrition in any community."

Working with her supervisor and colleagues of the Nutrition Unit, the aim of the project is to sensitise households, caterers and bakers on using OFSP for different food forms. As a result, food trials were conducted at WIAD and recipes compiled for training of the target groups. In 2014, twenty District WIAD Officers stationed at sweet potato growing districts were trained at Bunso, in the Eastern region. Similarly, 35 bakers belonging to the Tabora Flour Users Association in Accra were trained on incorporating OFSP into bread and pastries in 2015. In addition, a demonstration was conducted for 80 farmers and food processors in the Upper East region in 2015. To further inform and educate community members, a brochure on the Health Benefits of OFSP has been developed.

Mildred has ensured that women are included in her project - over 80% of the training beneficiaries are women and more women groups will be trained and monitored in 2016 to assess impact.

Some of the beneficiaries have started income generating activities with OFSP products. There is currently "potaghurt" (potato yoghurt), an OFSP drink and OFSP bread in Ghanaian markets. It is expected that the OFSP value chain will be fully developed for better family nutrition. Mildred is currently monitoring participants trained in 2014 at Bunso to assess how far they have promoted OFSP use in their respective districts. Participants will also share their best practices and identify the challenges they face in developing these value chains.

Mildred credits her Masters in Australia with providing the right environment to be able to make a positive impact on nutrition in Ghana through the OFSP project. "Studying in Australia equipped me with in-depth knowledge and skills in effective nutrition programme planning and implementation. The knowledge gained on sociology of food and nutrition, critical thinking, teamwork and facilitation has played a key role in making this project successful."

Across the continent, Romana Mbinya, a Senior Agricultural Officer at the Kenya Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries has recently started a collaborative project in Rangwe Sub-County with the International Centre for Potato that also promotes the production and utilisation of OFSP.

"Families in this region take a lot maize and cassava which are mainly carbohydrates hence introducing the orange fleshed sweet potatoes together with other indigenous food crops will boost household nutritional status especially for children and mothers," Romana explains.

So far five nurseries have been established (two in the local primary and secondary schools) for multiplying sweet potato vines which will be used to establish bulking sites. The vines will be distributed to over 500 farmers in the Rangwe Sub-County by the beginning of the long rain season.

Romana acknowledges her Australia Awards Masters in Rural Management Systems which she completed in 2014 at the University of Queensland, with giving her the ability and knowledge

to engage with rural communities, manage stakeholders and evaluate the impact made by the project. "My course taught me how best to work with the rural communities and how to identify and assist with opportunities. My knowledge on stakeholder management has been crucial in charting collaborative paths. I am now able to promote the objectives of my institution without undermining the work of other stakeholders."

Romana is also the Sub-County Crops Development Officer for Rangwe so matters on crop production and food security are her responsibility. In collaboration with other staff members her specific roles including mobilising and vetting project beneficiaries, training beneficiaries on food sensitive agriculture, carrying out value addition activities and project monitoring and evaluation.

Though orange flesh sweet potatoes are new to the region, Romana is no stranger at convincing small farmers to adopt new methods and products. She successfully carried out a government food security project in Homabay Sub-County focusing on the provision of subsidised maize and rice seeds to farmer groups. The project has benefitted over 500 households (approximately 3,000 persons) in the sub-county with a production of over 74 tonnes of maize. The availability of this maize will have a long time impact on food prices in the local markets for the next six months. Romana hopes to build on the achievements of the maize project by carrying out capacity building and leveraging on her knowledge of value chains, "My knowledge on agribusiness value chain management will also come in handy when I carry out capacity building for sweet potatoes farmers on marketing their crop. I look forward to training them on how they can build collaboration with other players in the value chain." Ultimately, Romana's aim is to contribute to creating communities that are healthy and productive. "Success to me is a food and nutrition-secure community, sustainable agricultural systems and vibrant and inclusive communities devoid of poverty, hunger and other social and economic inequalities."

★ / Orange Flesh Sweet Potato products (Mildred Suglo)





# Advocating for a regional solution to ending gender-based violence in conflict

**Writer:** Itumeleng Komanyane & Otae Mkandawire  
**Photography:** DFAT

Through advocacy and regional partnerships, Australia Awards Alumna Itumeleng Komanyane from Botswana is leading a campaign to raise awareness of the devastating effects of sexual violence as a weapon of war.

Election protests which began in April 2015 in Burundi quickly escalated to serious clashes between security forces and protestors; soon there were numerous civilian casualties and citizens fleeing their homes to seek refuge in neighbouring countries and beyond. Sonke Gender Justice, a non-governmental organisation based in South Africa started receiving requests, through their partner organisations, to find safe and effective ways to respond to the alarming rates of sexual violence and generalised violence in Burundi. In response, Sonke Gender Justice started an advocacy campaign in February 2016 (expected to run until August 2016) to bring attention to the consequences of the rising conflict in Burundi.

The campaign began shortly after Australia Awards Alumna Itumeleng Komanyane returned from the University of Sydney where she had participated in the Transitional Justice and Gender Justice Fellowship. On her return she was tasked with managing the Gender Norms Transformation project at Sonke Gender Justice where she works as the Manager for International Programs. The project focuses on policy advocacy, movement building, skills building on social justice issues and generating an evidence base for the work around engaging men and boys for gender equality. Periodically, the project also rises to emerging needs on the continent - such as the Burundi crisis - where there are human rights abuses.

Itumeleng says the skills she gained from her short course have had a direct impact on her organisation's response and her ability to create a fast-acting and high impact strategy. "I have been able to utilise the skills set from my fellowship to provide strategic input into designing the advocacy activity around the current situation in Burundi. During conflict we know that sexual violence is at its peak due to the absence of rule of law; advocating for an end to the conflict will therefore benefit women and girls who are most at risk."

While the coordination base is in South Africa, Itumeleng says the campaign has been designed to have regional input through partners in the MenEngage Africa alliance, and MenEngage global alliance who are lending their voices to the estimated 258 000 refugees currently affected by this civil strife in Burundi. "Many have fled the conflict, however even those who stayed in Burundi cannot speak freely, there is a need for another voice to speak up about this conflict and convict the powers that be to actively and deliberately work to end the unrest and prevent conflict."

Furthermore, the campaign seeks to hold political leaders accountable around sexual violence in conflict, and to get the world to pay attention to Burundi, and many other countries currently going through the same. "For over six months, there was silence on the Burundi situation from world leaders, African leaders and international agencies therefore there was a need to develop an advocacy activity around the Burundi crisis," Itumeleng says.

Australia Awards Fellowships provide ample opportunities for participants to effectively share experiences from their different contexts that are relevant to the work of the group as a whole. In addition to building her skills set around gender and justice, the fellowship provided an opportunity to learn from other participant's first-hand experience of effective response during conflict situations. Itumeleng recalls lessons she learned from fellow participants: "A participant from Uganda who had been abducted by rebels at a very young age, and only managed to escape in her twenties, shared harrowing stories of her experiences during captivity. What stood out for me was her call for community education and strengthening the reintegration for ex-captives. Another participant from Kenya spoke about the importance of documenting evidence and ensuring that there are resources for effective prosecution."

The experience-sharing by fellow course participants coupled with the course material and exposure to various justice institutions' operations has assisted Itumeleng with the ability to develop multi-tiered advocacy campaign strategies.

As the manager for international programs, Itumeleng is tasked with identifying emerging advocacy priorities, working with other colleagues to develop strategies, coordinating the response strategy, liaising with funders and other development partners such as the UN agencies to secure resources for the strategy, and to

ensure that advocacy activities involve other partners in the region. She has also capitalised on her ongoing links with fellow Alumni of her fellowship and included them in designing the campaign. "Their involvement is critical in not only shaping our response but they understand the nuances around such work." Itumeleng's links with Australia are continued through her organisation as Sonke Gender Justice also works with two Australian volunteers who contribute widely to the organisation through project and strategy development, event organising, developing training programs and creating accessible training resources.

Itumeleng is convinced that a regional response to the consequences of civil conflict is essential because conflict always has a regional socio-economic impact and is a breeding ground for sexual crimes. "Conflict in one part of Africa negatively affects economic development in other African countries; the number of Burundian refugees flocking to other African countries including South Africa is well documented. Beyond the need and responsibility of states to provide refuge for refugees and the resulting scramble for sometimes limited resources and xenophobia, what has also been a real concern are the reports of sexual violence emerging out of this situation."

While the project is still in its initial stages and is designed to complement other advocacy strategies on the Burundi crisis, Itumeleng's one hope is that the campaign will effectively raise

awareness on the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war. "The rate of rape in conflict, post conflict and high violence settings in Africa is a major concern and a gross human rights violation. Many of our leaders are quiet about this. The important issue of sovereignty of states should never undermine the plight of women, men and children whose lives are affected daily. We would like to see people in Burundi and elsewhere in the region living peacefully in a country free of conflict, enjoying a good quality of life, as well as full enjoyment of human dignity and fundamental human rights."

## Key results achieved

- Issuing a petition calling government and regional structures such as the African Union to respond to the crisis situation
- Collaborating with other partners to develop advocacy strategies targeting the South African Government as a key entry point but also working with our partners in the Great Lakes region on how to best support national level advocacy
- Discussions with UN Women on highlighting the impact of civil strife on women and girls
- Developing a concept note and engaging potential funders and other strategic stakeholders
- Developing a visibility package such as branded apparel requesting for action in Burundi

★ / Itumeleng Komanyane from Botswana speaks about her leadership experience at the Women in Leadership event in Nairobi





# 2016 Graeme Wilson and Sandra Vegting Leadership Award Recipients hope to influence the process of social inclusion in economic development

★ / HE Susan Coles congratulates Mary Daniella Allas on receiving the Sandra Vegting Memorial Leadership Award



To emphasise its commitment to harnessing and promoting leadership development in Africa, the Australian Government established the Graeme Wilson and Sandra Vegting Memorial Leadership Awards in 2014. The Awards commemorate HE Mr Graeme Wilson (1953 - 2014), Australia's High Commissioner to South Africa from 2012 until 2014; and HE Ms Sandra Vegting (1963 - 2014) Australia's High Commissioner to Mauritius from 2011 until 2014. The Award is given to outstanding scholarship recipients from the countries the late ambassadors represented to access leadership training during their study in Australia.

The 2015-16 Graeme Wilson Award recipient is Thabani Zondo from South Africa. Thabani currently works at the South African Department of Trade and Industry as an Assistant Director: Environment and Energy Efficiency, where he researches issues related to the competitiveness and development of the Energy Efficiency sector. He aims to use the Award to develop his latent leadership capabilities. "I believe that the opportunities that come with it will enable me to nurture my leadership potential in addition to my technical capabilities."

Thabani has already proven that he is a rising leader. In 2011 he was recognised as the most progressive junior official in the discipline of Environmental Planning, Governance, and Information Management, by the KwaZulu Natal (Provincial) Department of Agriculture, Environmental Affairs & Rural Development for supporting municipalities in proactively dealing with environmental issues in their development plans.

Thabani will leave for Australia in June 2016 to undertake a Master of Climate Change at the Australian National University and says he is looking forward to the world-class facilities and the subject matter of his course. "Climate Change is a phenomenon that has historical, contemporary and future importance to the survival of humankind." As an Awardee living with a disability, Thabani is also eager to start advocating for social inclusion in Climate Change adaptation and mitigation initiatives. "I look forward to becoming a loud voice of people living with disabilities."

Mary Daniella Allas from Mauritius is the recipient of the 2015-16 Sandra Vegting Award. Mary worked as an Assistant Manager in Human Resources at the Rodrigues Regional Assembly before going on Award. She says the leadership Award has heightened her ambition to realise her leadership potential. "Receiving this Award is a milestone for me and a confirmation of my call to contribute to developing the administrative sector of my Island."

Rodrigues Island is a very small (18km long and 8km wide) semi-autonomous territory 650km east off mainland Mauritius. Working with the Rodrigues Regional Assembly has thrust Mary into an influential position where she can contribute to the economic growth of the Island by directing policy initiatives. "Rodrigues [Regional Assembly] is working towards the economic empowerment of its entire population, made up primarily of female-headed households. This Award has boosted my confidence and inspired me to help develop an innovative and creative society where individuals can join the global economy."

Mary left Mauritius in January 2016 to undertake a Master of Public Policy at Flinders University and says that apart from the technical skills she will obtain, she hopes to gain interpersonal and teamwork skills necessary for successful leadership. "Australia Awards brings together top achievers, and this interaction will provide collective motivation for me to grow as a future leader."

★ / HE Adam McCarthy congratulates Thabani Zondo on receiving the Graeme Wilson Memorial Leadership Award



# Alumni Association News Briefs

## Launch of the Association of Botswana Australia Alumni

The Association of Botswana Australia Alumni (AoBAA) was officially launched on 30 March 2016 in Gaborone, Botswana. Made up of Australia Awards Alumni and privately sponsored Alumni, the Association will provide a forum for the Alumni to network and collectively utilise their skills and expertise for development initiatives. It will also create people-to-people links, which will assist to advise Australian and Botswana institutions on social, economic, cultural and education issues. The AoBAA also aims to assist potential applicants with information on the opportunities to study in Australia. Officiating at the launch of the Association, Australian High Commissioner - to Botswana, HE Adam McCarthy said, "Australia is delighted to host Botswana students in our universities each year, both those privately funded and those who receive Australia Awards scholarships. The Alumni Association is a fantastic initiative which helps to ensure that their connection with Australia does not end on their return home where they go on to make valuable contributions to Botswana's development."



★ / Association of Botswana Australia Alumni launch event (AoBAA)

Mr Diabi Mmualefe, Director – Asia and the Pacific Desk in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, represented the Botswana government at the event. Former Botswana High Commissioner to Australia, HE M. Selepeng was also in attendance. For more information, visit: <http://www.aobaa.co.bw>

## Ethiopia Alumni Leadership Training

The Australian Embassy in Addis Ababa, in partnership with the Ethiopia Australia Alumni Association, held a three-day training workshop on leadership skills for Alumni from 15-17 February 2016 at the Hilton Hotel, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The three day interactive training conducted by the Centre for Creative Leadership (CCL) focused on empowering Alumni with leadership essentials, contributed to their growth and helped them raise the profile of the Association. The embassy worked closely with the Ethiopian Alumni Ambassador and a core group of enthusiastic Alumni to lay the foundations for the development of the Association.

Speaking at the opening session of the workshop, Australian Ambassador to Ethiopia HE Mark Sawers encouraged the Alumni to use their potential and grow the Alumni network of professionals who will further contribute to their country's development, "Ethiopians who studied in Australia have become an important bridge in the relationship between Australia and Ethiopia. The Australian Government is keen to promote and foster important links between Australia and Ethiopia."



★ / Members of Ethiopia Alumni Association with Australian Ambassador to Ethiopia HE Mark Sawers (DFAT)



# Alumni Association News Briefs

## Australia Alumni Association of Uganda hosts family day in Kampala

The Australia Alumni Association of Uganda (A3-U) hosted a family day outing and reunion event at Protea Hotel in Kampala on 19 March 2016. The family day was funded by the Australian Government as part of the support to Alumni Associations.

The get-together was aimed at strengthening Australia-Africa partnerships, and building the capacity of the Alumni Association. The day included a team building exercise, bouncing castle for the kids, face painting activity and barbecue lunch. Participants also had an opportunity to network with fellow Alumni and Australians living in Uganda.

In attendance were over one-hundred Australia Awards Alumni and their families from Uganda, over twenty Australians living in Uganda as well as friends of Australia Alumni Association of Uganda. Sixteen Alumni who completed their studies in Australia in the last three years were welcomed into the Association.

In his opening remarks, the Alumni Association Chairperson Mr Aggrey Kagonyera welcomed back the Alumni who recently returned from Australia, and commended the Australian citizens for joining the function. He outlined the objectives of A3U, and invited the Alumni to join the growing Association and help build it from within. "We look forward to holding such related activities in future, and invite you all to partner with us", Kagonyera said.



★ / Ugandan Alumni (A3-U)

Honourable Consul at the Australian Consulate in Uganda, Mr Patrick Bitature, who is also the patron of A3-U, was the chief guest. Mr Bitature affirmed the Australian Government's commitment to Alumni engagement and networking, and urged Alumni to take advantage of the existing links with Australia to champion their cause. "I encourage you to form business partnerships as like-minded people, and create trade and business linkages with the Australians through the various networking opportunities that you have".

## Australia Global Alumni Portal Launched

Australia is one of the most popular destinations for international students seeking a world-class education experience. More than 2.5 million international students have studied here in the last fifty years. Over 80,000 Alumni received Australian Government Scholarships and Fellowships, combined with private students, Australia has Alumni from every corner of the globe.

The Australia Global Alumni website is a virtual global network that has been created to connect, build and invigorate the international community of scholars who have studied in Australia and Australians who have studied overseas.

You can help grow this global Alumni community by connecting, celebrating and joining together to make the most of global opportunities. To join, visit [globalalumni.gov.au](http://globalalumni.gov.au), register your details and connect to a world of possibilities.



**More information: Scan here to join**



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