



COMMONWEALTH  
SCHOLARSHIPS

NEWS

Promoting learning, development and co-operation

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Searching for knowledge:  
Commonwealth Scholars and education

THE CSFP AT THE CCEM • COUNTRY PROFILE – MALAYSIA • NEWS ROUND-UP  
SCHOLARS' NEWS • ALUMNI IN ACTION • NETWORKS AND EVENTS

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**Cover** **Monirul Khan** (left), Commonwealth Alumnus from Bangladesh, and his team in the Sundarbans forest, searching for tigers – see page 8. © Tom Maddox

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## Commonwealth Scholarships News

### Editorial Team:

Dr John Kirkland, Jocelyn Law,  
Anna O'Flynn and Natasha Lokhun

### Design and Print:

dsj colourworks

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### Commonwealth Scholarship Commission

c/o The Association of Commonwealth Universities  
Woburn House, 20–24 Tavistock Square,  
London, WC1H 9HF, UK

[comments@cscuk.org.uk](mailto:comments@cscuk.org.uk)  
[www.cscuk.org.uk](http://www.cscuk.org.uk)

Many of you will know that the first Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers, which established the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Programme (CSFP), was held in Oxford in 1959. 50 years on, many of the organisations committed to excellence in Commonwealth education, including the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission, have joined with us to mark the anniversary. Oxford is delighted to have been the venue for a two-day conference, held at the end of March, entitled 'Commonwealth Educational Cooperation: Looking Ahead at 50'. And we assembled an illustrious panel to debate 'The Future of Higher Education in the Commonwealth'.

In this 50th anniversary year, I want to salute the tremendous achievements of the CSFP. It has enabled more than 25,000 talented citizens of Commonwealth countries to study in another Commonwealth country: to develop their skills, expand their horizons, and create the ties that bind the Commonwealth into a genuine alliance. I can tell you from personal experience that it makes a great difference, as you engage in delicate diplomatic relationships around the world, to be able to rely on the personal and transnational connections generated by scholarship programmes like this one.

Commonwealth Scholarships have been essential in helping us to attract top students to graduate study in Oxford. At a time when our peer institutions in the US offer 5-year funding packages to virtually all students enrolling in PhD programmes, the availability of prestigious, multi-year funding such as Commonwealth Scholarships is absolutely critical to our international competitiveness.

Oxford is proud to have welcomed 1,102 Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows in the past 50 years. These award holders enrich our academic community immeasurably. When they leave, it is to a range of fascinating careers, with a particular emphasis on academia, the law, and public service. The current Governor of the Bank of Canada, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sydney, the Deputy Dean of Outreach at the University of the West Indies, and the Deputy Secretary in the Ministry of Health in Pakistan – all were Commonwealth Scholars at Oxford. We are pleased, given this record of success, to be one of 71 UK universities partnering with the UK government to continue developed Commonwealth Scholarships to the UK.

There are many uncertainties about what the 21st century holds for all of us across the Commonwealth. But a bright future for Commonwealth Scholarships should not be one of them. We look forward to the next 50 years of achievement.

### Lord Patten of Barnes

Chancellor of the University of Oxford

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**Lord Patten**

Chancellor of the University of Oxford

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# NEWS ROUND-UP

## ONLINE ALUMNI REGISTRATION LAUNCH

The CSC launched its first online alumni registration form for Fellows in April. Eligible Fellows have been emailed and directed to an online form. In July, those Scholars coming to the end of their award will be invited by email to register using the online system, which enables Scholars and Fellows to register as alumni from any location (UK or overseas) where they have internet access.

## NEW AWARDS ADMINISTRATOR

We are delighted to welcome Mariken Schipper, who joined the CSC's secretariat in December 2008 as an Awards Administrator. Previously, Mariken was Postgraduate Administrator at Wolfson College, University of Cambridge.



**Mariken Schipper**, new Awards Administrator

## PROFILE: NEW CHAIR OF THE COMMISSION



Professor Tim Unwin (pictured left) became Chair of the Commission in January 2009. He has been a member of the Commission since 2004, and is currently UNESCO Chair in ICT4D and Professor of Geography at Royal Holloway, University of London. He has written or edited 15 books, and over 170 papers and other publications. He holds a range of other advisory and organisational roles, including:

- High Level Advisor, Global Alliance for ICT and Development
- Academic Advisor and External Examiner, Institute of Masters of Wine
- The Association of Commonwealth Universities Africa Unit Higher and Further Education Partnership Working Group
- Senior Programme Committee, ICTD 2009, Doha
- Communication and Information Committee of the UK National Commission for UNESCO
- Editorial board member for several communications/geography journals

From 2001-2004 he led the UK Prime Minister's Imfundo: Partnership for IT in Education initiative based within the Department for International Development, and from 2007-2008 he was Director and then Senior Advisor to the World Economic Forum's Partnerships for Education initiative with UNESCO. He was also previously Head of the

Department of Geography at Royal Holloway (1999-2001), and has served as Honorary Secretary of the Royal Geographical Society (with The Institute of British Geographers) (1995-1997).

His hobbies and interests include family, wine, cooking, walking, rugby, and music.

## NEW SCHOLARSHIPS IN SCOTLAND AND SOUTH AFRICA

The Scottish Government will support awards for students from developed Commonwealth countries for doctoral study at Scottish universities from 2009, working alongside the London-based Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills. Meanwhile, the University of Pretoria will offer new awards (two for doctoral and one for postdoctoral study) to citizens of any Commonwealth country, as part of South Africa's commitment to the CSFP.

## NEW ELECTRONIC APPLICATION SYSTEM

Online application forms will be available on the CSC website for UK awards from August 2009.

Forms will still be accessible as interactive PDFs as well. Applicants will be able to:

- complete applications online (with as many sittings in front of a computer as necessary)
- access a help screen, available at all times
- include email addresses of referees and potential supervisors in the UK
- track the progress of their application

Once submitted, the application will be 'forwarded' to the relevant nominating agency, with automatic emails sent to the referees. Emails will automatically be sent to the higher education institutions in the UK to which the applicant is applying, asking for a simple supporting statement.

Agencies that nominate candidates for UK awards will be able to enter their own deadlines for receipt of applications. Agencies can also send applications to external advisers for comment, and track applications' progress. Automatic emails will be sent to applicants, referees and agencies when a decision is made. Further information on the new system is available at [www.cscuk.org.uk/news/eas.asp](http://www.cscuk.org.uk/news/eas.asp)

## ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE IN NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand, a keen supporter of the CSFP, plans a 50th anniversary conference on 3-4 September 2009 in Wellington. Guests will include current Commonwealth Scholars, eminent New Zealand alumni and invited guests. There will be a series of stimulating seminars and activities, as well as celebrations at the Houses of Parliament. Detailed information will be posted at [www.cscuk.org.uk/news/50anniversary.asp](http://www.cscuk.org.uk/news/50anniversary.asp)

(l-r) **Lockwood Smith**, Commonwealth Alumnus and Speaker of the House of Representatives, New Zealand; **Marta Lang**, Commonwealth Alumnus from New Zealand; and **Dr John Kirkland**, Executive Secretary of the CSC, at a recent meeting in London, discussing the anniversary conference



**Commonwealth Scholars** at the Commonwealth Day Observance on 9 March 2009. This year marks the 60th anniversary of the Commonwealth, and the theme of the observance was 'Serving a new generation'. Commonwealth Fellows also attended a celebratory tea party on the day, at the Royal Commonwealth Society.

# SCHOLARS' NEWS

*Education is at the very heart of the Commission's activities and is something which all Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows hold in common. In the run up to the 17th CCEM, which will consider 'Education in the Commonwealth: Towards and Beyond Global Means and Targets', we look to award holders whose studies and research do just that.*

## ACCESS TO EDUCATION FOR MIGRANT CHILDREN IN SOUTH AFRICA

Stephanie Buckland, a first-year Commonwealth Scholar studying for a DPhil at the University of Sussex, is focusing her research on Zimbabwean refugees' access to education in her native South Africa. 'Available research shows that there are many cross-border migrant children in South Africa who are not accessing or are being denied access to this basic right. A review of policies, barriers to access and the government's response could provide support for policy changes and the inclusion of more children in school.'

Stephanie's research will 'examine these challenges through various perspectives, focusing on the migrant children themselves, examining their experiences and views on education, the challenges they have faced with regard to education, and the barriers to access. I will then look through the lens of the institutions, government, and local actors to understand their perspective of the challenges and implications of including these children in the current South African education system. The final aspect will be to examine the roles of social networks that enable access to basic education either in the formal or non-formal sense for these children'.

Stephanie feels that her Scholarship has provided her with 'the opportunity to share experiences with a wide range of other international students, giving perspectives on development issues from around the world. Upon returning to South Africa, I intend to use the knowledge and experience I have gained to



**Stephanie Buckland,**

*Commonwealth Scholar from South Africa*

focus further on ensuring equitable access for the most marginalised, which I consider one of the most critical development challenges our country faces'.

## GLOBAL EQUITABLE AND QUALITY EDUCATION SYSTEMS



**Simon Breakspear,**  
*Commonwealth Scholar from Australia*

Australian Commonwealth Scholar Simon Breakspear is currently undertaking an MSc in Educational Studies (Comparative and International Education) at the University of Oxford. His research focuses on 'the globalisation of education and the role of intergovernmental institutions in shaping the purpose, direction and governance of nation states' educational systems'.

Simon's study in the UK has provided him with 'incredible opportunities', enabling him 'to develop a capacity to critically analyse educational systems and to determine the factors that provide the most equitable and quality systems worldwide. I have also greatly benefited from the opportunities to engage with educationalists at international organisations, as I aim to understand how they bring about change in global education trends'.

Simon values his status as a Commonwealth Scholar, which has facilitated 'deep discussions with impressive young leaders from across the Commonwealth. My new friends from Africa, South Asia and the Pacific have taught me far more than any book or journal could. The networks we have formed will allow us to collaborate, learn and generate new solutions to educational problems, even after we have returned to our home countries'. After completing his studies, Simon plans to 'expend myself for the development of a more equitable education system in Australia and to help raise a new generation of emerging educational leaders. Beyond this, as a global citizen, I want to play my role in developing innovative, creative and entrepreneurial solutions to solve the greatest educational challenges of our time. I am convinced

that my time as a Commonwealth Scholar will greatly contribute towards my readiness for this work'.

## ENHANCING TANZANIAN SECONDARY SCHOOL EDUCATION



**Dorothy Phumbwe,**  
*Commonwealth Scholar from Tanzania*

Dorothy Phumbwe, Commonwealth Scholar from Tanzania, is working towards a PhD in Educational Management and Planning at the University of Bristol. She is examining 'self-help activities adopted by some of the Tanzanian public secondary schools as a way of supplementing governmental resources which are not sufficient'. The

study will explore the full range of school self-help activities and the associated equity issues arising from these activities, so as to inform policy.

Dorothy feels that her Commonwealth Scholarship has enabled her to 'study in one of the best universities in terms of novel and contemporary lines of research, and availability of both excellent lecturers and outstanding amenities. The conducive learning environment has continued to enrich my research and social skills, and academic knowledge.'

Upon completion of her studies, Dorothy hopes to use the knowledge gained for the development of her career and of society. 'Dissemination of my research findings and their implications through different platforms to users within Tanzania and internationally will be conducted as a contribution to knowledge on the financing and funding of public secondary education. Moreover, I am looking forward to carrying out research projects in the future and to continuing to teach at the University of Dar es Salaam. Having a PhD qualification will enhance my competencies to assume the responsibilities of teaching effectively in both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes and supervising postgraduate students, as well as facilitating needs-based professional development programmes for the Tanzanian education sector.'



# IN YOUR OWN WORDS

*Garfield Young (Commonwealth Scholar, PhD in Surveying Education, University of Nottingham) describes the research he is currently undertaking, investigating how education is shaping the geomatics engineer.*

## LOCAL MATERIALS FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION

Papua New Guinean Commonwealth Scholar Samuel Haihuie is studying for a PhD at the Institute of Education. 'Researching the pedagogy of distance education has influenced my own thinking and outlook on society. Distance is not just the physical separation measured in kilometres, but also that social and cultural space between subject and object.'

This observation is particularly pertinent in Papua New Guinea, where the existence of several



**Samuel Haihuie,**  
Commonwealth Scholar from  
Papua New Guinea

languages and dialects means that it is not feasible to develop course materials in a variety of languages, which is often an issue of contention. 'If the selected language is that of a dominant ethnic group in politics and business, it is likely to bring resentment from speakers of other languages. In addition, it is imperative to note that use of a colonising power's language carries the unseen danger of institutionalising, through a top-down authoritative approach, a distance education practice that is not appropriate for local culture. Many in "developing countries" feel that we are forced to accept courses and methods of delivery from Western societies when, in fact, we have a choice. The preference is to use materials developed locally and to deliver them in a way that is sensitive to and accommodative of local indigenous practices and ways of doing things.'

Upon his return to Papua New Guinea, Samuel hopes to implement the knowledge he has acquired. 'It is my desire upon completion of my research to strengthen the pedagogic practices at the University of Papua New Guinea Open College. Our distance education practice requires self-reflective and critical evaluation to make it more relevant and appropriate to our local context and within the means of resources available to us.'

The internet, mobile technology, satellite global positioning systems, remote sensing imagery, three-dimensional laser scanning and robotics are all evidence of an age of rapidly changing technology, and they are all features of a fascinating profession still unfamiliar to many: geomatics engineering, the modern interpretation of the profession traditionally known as land surveying. The discipline is at the forefront of employing state-of-the-art technologies in the execution of its widening functions; it offers the perfect mix of technology with management and affords equal opportunities for the spatially intelligent to work indoors and out.

For most professions, there are established systems for education, training and certification. Can the educational strategies used in traditional land surveying programmes produce the competencies required of the geomatics engineer? Should there be a new philosophy underlying educational systems? Should there be a global standard for educating this new professional?

My research will examine curriculum reform and innovation in curriculum design and their implementation within geomatics engineering programmes. The marrying of my interests and qualifications in both education and engineering articulates my epistemological position that it is possible to determine which educational strategies are most capable of developing specified competencies in particular contexts. My research will determine the relevance and effectiveness of current educational strategies used in the discipline, and will have the potential to inform reformation of educational strategies for geomatics engineering worldwide.

The UK is an ideal location from which to carry out this research for a number of reasons. Many of the lecturers involved in the education of geomatics engineers in the Caribbean were educated in the UK, and several of the institutions that have employed curriculum innovations are in Europe. The University of Nottingham provides a wide range of resources to support my research interest, and the diverse mix of students and staff from various backgrounds enriches the learning environment.



**Garfield Young,** Commonwealth Scholar,

**My research will have the potential to reform educational strategies worldwide.**

I am currently on study leave from the University of Technology, Jamaica (UTech), where I am a lecturer in the

Faculty of the Built Environment. On completion of my PhD, I will return to my home university to continue as a lecturer. I expect that I will be called on to work in areas related to my research, and I see my future role as being a key player in developing relevant academic programmes for technical disciplines, not only at UTech but at other institutions in Jamaica and the Caribbean region in general.

I am on a steep learning curve as I have had to adjust to a new culture while managing a very demanding year of study. There is the added challenge of maintaining close links with my family, now divided by the Atlantic Ocean. The Jamaican proverb 'if yuh waan good yuh nose affi run' ('reward comes at a cost') applies, so I welcome the challenges, as I look forward to the future benefits. The CSC has facilitated a golden opportunity which I wholly embrace so that I will be fully equipped and ready to take on added responsibilities on my return.

# OPPORTUNITIES TO DEVELOP: THE CSFP AT THE CCEM

*Dr John Kirkland looks ahead to the forthcoming Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CCEM) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, this June.*



*A speaker at the last **Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers** in Cape Town, December 2006*

Commonwealth Scholarships are unusual – they are probably the only scholarship programme in the world to be regularly reviewed by a ministerial conference. Having been established at the first Commonwealth education conference in 1959, the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP) has been on the agenda at virtually all of their sixteen conferences since.

Such high level visibility may not always have been welcome – reporting means accountability! At other times, it may have been an irrelevance. Ministerial conferences are sometimes characterised by rhetoric rather than action. However, the 16th CCEM, held in Cape Town, South Africa, in 2006, was definitely a step forward. The conference agreed positive steps forward for the CSFP, including ambitious new targets for award numbers, and the concept of a new endowment fund to help support Commonwealth Scholarships in a wider range of countries.

The 17th CCEM this June has a real opportunity to take these decisions forward. The formal launch of the endowment fund devised in Cape Town, and already attracting significant support, will be a highlight, but the willingness of the Malaysian hosts to make higher education a priority on the agenda, and the awareness generated by the 50th anniversary of the Plan, both offer opportunities for even greater progress.

Alumni studies suggest that, 50 years after its formation, the CSFP has been a real success. This is not only the case in numerical terms, but also in terms of impact. But the environment in which the Plan operates is very different to that of 1959. The anniversary should not only be an opportunity for self-congratulation, but also for radical thinking about how things can be done even better in future.

One of the principles of the CSFP has always been that there should be a degree of reciprocity. The endowment fund will develop this by ensuring that scholarships are available in a wider range of countries. Another is partnership – the notion that selection should involve both home countries (who typically identify and nominate candidates) and host countries (typically responsible for final selection).

The notion of partnership has never been as important – but the means of achieving it could usefully be reviewed. In 1959, the two-stage process of selection was devised on the assumption that there was no way in which home and host countries could talk to each other on a daily basis. New communication methods have largely removed this constraint. This year, for example, the UK will begin to move to an electronic application system (see page 3). The facility will exist for more interactive communication – on both wider priorities and the qualities of individual candidates.

Another principle of the Plan is that scholarships should be awarded on the basis of merit, and should 'recognise and promote the highest levels of intellectual achievement' alongside a 'sharing of educational experience among all Commonwealth countries'. Over the past decade, these concepts have been modified. In 2000, education ministers agreed to seek more diverse forms of scholarship, to attract different kinds of students. The introduction of distance learning awards by the UK and Canada, both designed to reach new audiences, is an example of this. Over the same period, governments have started to regard scholarships much more overtly as part of their development, international relations and even educational recruitment strategies. There is a need to consider where the balance between these factors lies, and how comfortably they fit with the notion of the initial scheme.

These issues need to be seen as opportunities, rather than threats. Of all the principles laid down by the CSFP founders in 1959, perhaps the most farsighted was the statement that the Plan would need to be sufficiently flexible to respond to changing needs. The ability to do this has been critical to the Plan's success, and the Kuala Lumpur meeting will be a further extension of this.



# RECORDING PAST ACHIEVEMENTS AND LOOKING TO FUTURE SUCCESS

Over the past fifty years, the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan has supported more than 25,000 citizens from all Commonwealth countries, with over 20 countries hosting awards. The overwhelming majority of award holders have returned to their home country to make a huge difference, many rising to the very highest ranks of their chosen professions.

The new issue of the *Directory of Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows* is a unique testament to these achievements. It contains career profiles of around 3,700 alumni, and lists the names, countries and years of award of over 25,000 individuals, from every corner of the Commonwealth. As Kamallesh Sharma, Commonwealth Secretary-General, says, 'The essential message of the first Directory is reinforced. Commonwealth Scholarships have been a wonderful investment, producing real leaders'.

## THE DIRECTORY – REVEALING THE IMPACT OF THE CSFP

Originally, the CSFP was intended to support individuals in their pursuit of 'the highest level of intellectual achievement'. Subsequently, some donor countries have aligned their awards more closely to international development objectives, whilst others have sought to identify 'future leaders'. More recently, host governments have seen scholarships as a way of maintaining the international profile of their universities and even attracting highly qualified individuals in the long term. Flexibility has been key to the CSFP's continued success, with Canada introducing postdoctoral fellowships and the United Kingdom adding short-term fellowships for mid-career professionals to its longstanding support for postgraduate work.

Higher education is the largest single career for alumni under the scheme. This is not surprising, for a number of reasons. The UK, in particular, reserves

a proportion of its awards for young and mid-career academic staff from developing countries, with the express intention that they should return to their home institutions following their studies. For many recipient countries, universities are the obvious employer to best utilise high-quality talent.

Reading through the profiles, however, it is also clear that support for

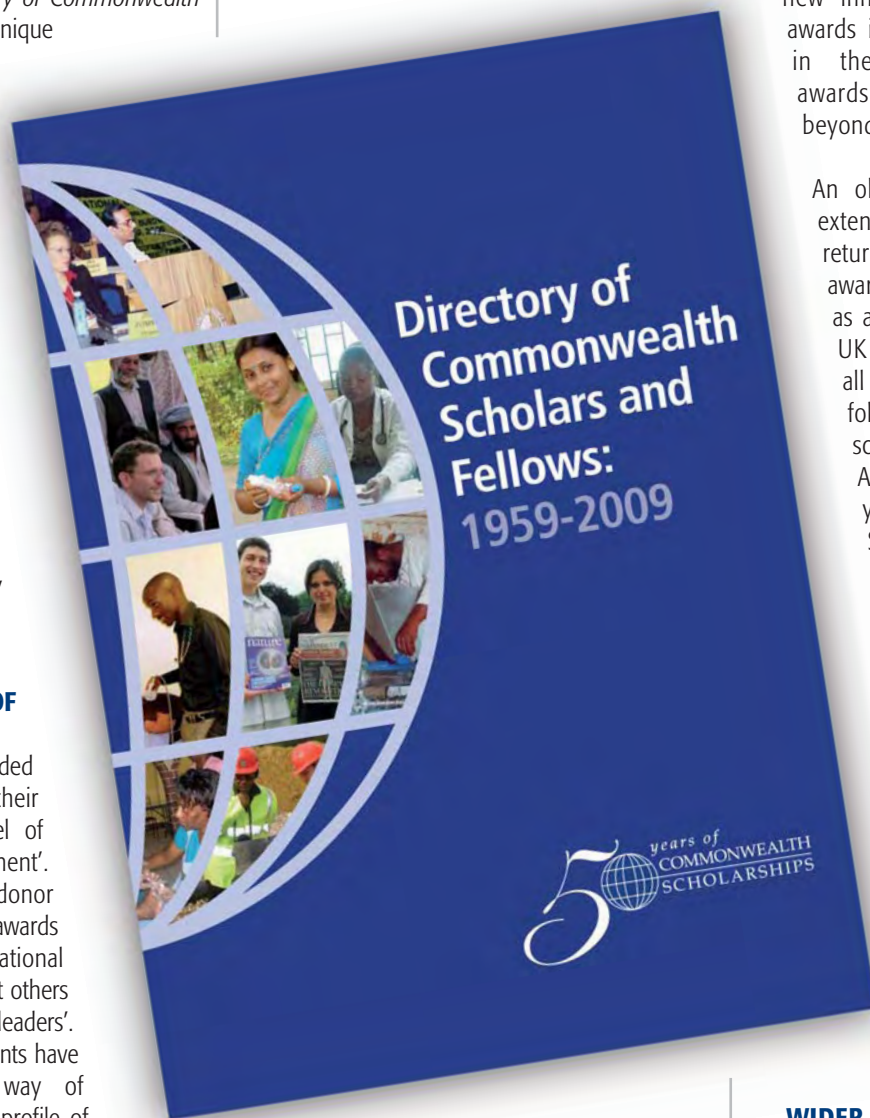
The profiles in the *Directory* provide the best possible evidence that Commonwealth Scholarships produce leaders in all walks of life, not just academia – politics, civil service, science, medicine, law, business, journalism, literature – to name a few areas. And if this is true of the alumni of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, it is perhaps even more likely to be true of the modern breed of Scholars. Several of the new innovations, such as undergraduate awards in Canada, professional fellowships in the UK, and distance learning awards have also increased the scope beyond academic careers.

An obvious indicator of impact is the extent to which Scholars and Fellows return to their home country after their awards. Study abroad is sometimes cited as a cause of brain drain, and a recent UK report suggested that some 40% of all postgraduate students aspire to stay following their study. Migration on this scale is not the experience of the CSFP. As our samples have grown over the years, surveys of Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows who studied in the UK have constantly shown a figure of 85-90% working in their home country or region. An analysis from Canada in 2003 placed the figure a little lower, but still well over two-thirds. In both cases, there is every expectation that this figure will continue to be at least as high, due in no small part to the introduction of distance learning and short-term undergraduate scholarships by the respective host countries.

## A RESOURCE FOR ALUMNI AND THE WIDER COMMONWEALTH

We envisage that the *Directory* will have a variety of uses. Firstly, it is an invaluable tool for facilitating networking amongst alumni. It will also be of immense use to national governments, the Commonwealth Secretariat and other Commonwealth and international organisations in identifying former award holders and possibly involving them in their work.

For further information on the *Directory*, and details of how to obtain a copy, please visit [www.cscuk.org.uk/news/alumni\\_dir.asp](http://www.cscuk.org.uk/news/alumni_dir.asp)



higher education contributes to a much wider impact. Not only are CSFP alumni responsible for teaching the next generation, but hundreds of alumni, whose first career has been in academia, are used by governments and international bodies as consultants or specialist advisers; many move in and out of government during their careers. As the CSC's recent evaluation survey discovered, 45% of the 2,226 respondents could cite at least one occasion on which they felt that they had influenced the thinking or policies of their government.

# ALUMNI IN ACTION

## Alumni News

### CONSERVING THE TIGER

Professor Monirul H Khan (Commonwealth Scholar, PhD in Wildlife Biology, University of Cambridge, 2000-2004) featured in a BBC documentary, 'Man-eating Tigers of the Sundarbans', broadcast in the UK in January 2009.

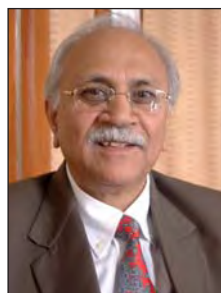


© Shehab Rayhan  
**Professor Monirul Khan** at a school awareness workshop for tiger conservation

Professor Khan, of the Zoology Department at Jahangirnagar University in Bangladesh, started working on the conservation of tigers in the Sundarbans during his Scholarship. Professor Khan's team have scientifically estimated the density of tigers, raised public awareness for tiger conservation, and developed an innovative technique using dogs to signal the presence of tigers and save human lives.

The BBC documentary showed the impact of a formal dog trainer on the village dogs. Professor Khan says, 'After the training, we formed packs of dogs and trained people. They regularly patrol the forest-village boundary and we found that this patrol discourages tigers from straying into the villages.'

### ALUMNI APPOINTED VICE-CHANCELLORS



**Dr Gyanendra Singh**, former Commonwealth Scholar

**Dr Gyanendra Singh** (Commonwealth Scholar, PhD in Agriculture, University of Reading, 1974-1977) has been re-appointed Vice-Chancellor of Mahatma Gandhi Chitrakoot Gramodaya University, India. Professor S V Sudhakar (Commonwealth Fellow, Cardiff University, 2003) was also recently appointed Vice-Chancellor of Dr B R Ambedkar University, India.

### INNOVATIVE RESEARCH PROJECT UTILISING HERBAL MEDICINE

**Professor A P G Amarasinghe** (Commonwealth Fellow, University of Exeter, 2002) has completed

the first research project of its kind in Ayurveda and traditional systems of medicine in Sri Lanka, with potential benefit for the manufacture of safe and effective Ayurvedic medicine.

### CANADIAN ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Commonwealth Alumni **Mike Hunter** and **Ross Kang** are launching an alumni association for Canadians. To learn more, subscribe to the mailing list, or get involved, please visit [www.cs.mcgill.ca/~rossk/commonwealth](http://www.cs.mcgill.ca/~rossk/commonwealth)

## Alumni events

### SIERRA LEONE RECEPTION



**Dr Julius Sandy**, former Commonwealth Scholar and Director of the Government of Sierra Leone Public Sector Reform Unit, and **Professor Tim Unwin**, Chair of the CSC

**Professor Tim Unwin**, Chair of the CSC, held a reception celebrating 50 years of Commonwealth Scholarships in Freetown, Sierra Leone, on 17 March 2009. Guests included alumni, Deputy High Commissioner Rachel Cooper, Director of the British Council June Rollinson, and representatives from the British Council.

### DISTANCE LEARNING SCHOLARS AND ALUMNI MEET IN UGANDA



**Professor Ann Floyd** (left), Commonwealth Scholarship Commissioner, with alumni at the CSC reception in Uganda

**Professor Ann Floyd**, Commonwealth Scholarship Commissioner, hosted a reception in Kampala, Uganda, on 27 March 2009. More than 50 guests attended, including Distance Learning Scholars, alumni, and British Council and Makerere University representatives. Professor Floyd said 'It was evident from the alumni that their scholarships had been of great value to them. As chair of the distance learning committee, I was delighted to meet many current Scholars and to hear how their studies were

influencing their professional lives. I am very grateful to the British Council for assistance in facilitating such a worthwhile event'.

## In brief

### AWARDS AND CAREER ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Dr Sharnika Abeyakirithi** (Commonwealth Scholar, MMedSci Dermatology, University of Edinburgh, 2007) won a prize for joint best oral presentation at the 2008 Fifth International Conference on the Biology, Chemistry and Therapeutic Applications of Nitric Oxide.

**Dr Johnson Adesodun** (Commonwealth Scholar, Split-site PhD in Soil Physics, University of Stirling, 2002) has been promoted to the position of Senior Lecturer (Soil Physics) at the University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Nigeria.

**Dr Lilian-Rita Akudolu** (Commonwealth Fellow, University of Glasgow, 2005) has been promoted to Professor in Education at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Nigeria.

**Professor Upali S Amarasinghe** (Commonwealth Fellow, Imperial College London, 2000-2001) won the Sri Lankan Committee of Vice Chancellors and Directors (CVCD) Excellence Award 2008 for most outstanding researcher in biological sciences.

**Professor Venkateswarlu Kadiyala** (Commonwealth Fellow, University of Durham, 1989) has been elected Fellow of the National Academy of Agricultural Sciences, India, and Fellow of the Association of Microbiologists of India.

**Dr Anil Namdeo** (Commonwealth Scholar, PhD in Environmental Science, University of Nottingham, 1992-1995) has joined the Transport Operations Research Group (TORG) at Newcastle University, UK, as a senior lecturer in transport and sustainability.

**Dr Gaya Ranawaka** (Commonwealth Fellow, National Institute for Medical Research, 2002), a senior lecturer at the Open University of Sri Lanka, has been awarded a University of Wales Swansea Fulton Fellowship by the Association of Commonwealth Universities.

**Dr Jayanie Weeratna** (Commonwealth Scholar, MSc Dental Science, University of Wales College of Medicine, 2002), a forensic dental surgeon, won the 2008 Outstanding Young Persons of Sri Lanka award for academic accomplishment.

**Dr Peter Wilkins** (Commonwealth Scholar, PhD in Sound Vibration, University of Southampton, 1974-1977) has been appointed Deputy Ombudsman of Western Australia.



# ALUMNI PROFILE

This issue, we look at the work of two alumni who are transforming education in their home countries in different ways – **Shireen Dooreemeah** in primary schools in Mauritius, and **Abdullah Shams Bin Tariq** at university level in Bangladesh.

**Shireen Dooreemeah** was a Commonwealth Professional Fellow at the League for the Exchange of Commonwealth Teachers in 2005.

Shireen has over 28 years' experience as a teacher, and for the last ten years has worked in schools with poor attainment levels in areas of social and economic deprivation in Mauritius. Shireen's experiences of new strategies for literacy, gained working in schools in Hackney during her Fellowship, have enabled her to formulate and implement her own project to improve literacy in similar schools in Mauritius.

The importance of the 'reading environment' in UK schools has been incorporated into Shireen's classroom. She has encouraged children to enjoy reading through providing specific reading areas and book corners. Classrooms are decorated, and theming lessons, emphasising key words, and the imaginative use of resources such as magazine cuttings and displays have engaged her pupils' interest and attention.



**Shireen Dooreemeah** (right) with pupils at an International Day of Peace celebration

children with a poor home life, offering games, computer literacy and therapeutic classes. There will also be provision for personal and family development, with access to a nurse and a psychologist, and meetings and advice groups for parents. If successful, Shireen believes that such day centres could be rolled out nationally. She is also working with the Mauritius-based NGO Institute of Social Development and Peace and its Lifting Girls Out Of Poverty/Role Model project.

The skills and knowledge gained during her award have had a far-reaching impact, as

Shireen is also involved in a variety of projects and NGOs seeking to protect and improve the situation of underprivileged children. She is the Mauritius teacher representative in a network of school communities, set up to tackle the problem of violence at school. She is also involved in the creation of an after-school day centre to cater for children in underprivileged areas. The centre will provide a safe and nurturing environment for

Shireen has been able to work with the Ministry of Education to disseminate new teaching methods across Mauritius, and her work has been widely reported in the press. Shireen acknowledges that teaching in socioeconomically deprived areas requires great energy and commitment, but that 'at the end of the day when you realise that some pupils or even one pupil has learned to read and write – this is the reward each teacher should be looking for'.

**Dr Abdullah Shams Bin Tariq** was a Commonwealth Scholar studying for a PhD in Physics at the University of Southampton in 2001-2004.

Shams is currently an Associate Professor in Physics at Rajshahi University, Bangladesh. His particular areas of interest are lattice QCD in particle physics and nuclear interactions in nuclear physics. During his Scholarship, Shams worked in his favoured area of particle physics, and has now introduced an MSc and research in this field at his university.

Whilst Shams was on award in the UK, he attended a training event jointly organised by the Association of Commonwealth Universities and the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP) on e-resources for developing country libraries. Back home in Bangladesh, he has played a pioneering role in

revolutionising access to e-resources at academic institutions through INASP's Programme for the Enhancement of Research Information (PERI) programme, which provides affordable and heavily discounted access to electronic journals and other resources for developing countries.

Shams has been working with academic libraries across Bangladesh, mobilising them and providing training and technical support. Shams recalls, 'Just a few years back many researchers of our country had almost no access to professional journals.

Libraries were struggling to subscribe to the needed resources, mainly for financial reasons, but also for administrative and other obstacles. Today, our access is comparable to average institutions in developing countries, in not only one subject area, but almost all subject areas. Within the short time of a couple of years, the Bangladesh INASP-PERI Consortium (BIPC) has reached more than 80% of the university teachers/researchers in Bangladesh'.

Despite the considerable energy Shams has devoted to PERI, he is primarily a scientist, and has published in leading physics journals. In 2008, he won a physics research award for a paper on hadron spectroscopy co-written during his Commonwealth Scholarship. In yet another direction, Shams extensively used the University of Southampton computer cluster facility while on award, and is now working to set up such a facility for researchers in Bangladesh.



**Dr Abdullah Shams Bin Tariq** (seated, far left) at an INASP training event in Bangladesh

# NETWORKS AND EVENTS



**Simon Breakspear**, Commonwealth Scholar, speaking at the Governance event



A session at the **50th anniversary conference**

## STRENGTHENING GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

The CSC Governance Network, in collaboration with the Commonwealth Policy Studies Unit, held its annual event on 7-9 March 2009, on the theme of 'The Commonwealth and Reform of International Institutions: Towards a consensus on global governance'. The conference highlighted areas in which the Commonwealth could be making a greater contribution to issues affecting developing countries. Matthew Albert, Chair of the Commonwealth Youth Caucus, emphasised the need for young citizens to be represented and to influence policies that impact upon their status and welfare. In the final session, High Commissioners of Mauritius and Antigua and Barbuda, as well as the Honorary Consul of Kiribati, highlighted the unique opportunity that the Commonwealth provides in giving a voice to small island states.

## 50TH ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE

On the weekend of 20-22 March 2009, 70 Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows gathered for a CSC 50th anniversary conference at Cumberland Lodge, Windsor. Discussions focused on 'Partnering for a More Equitable and Sustainable Future', and the event offered a unique opportunity to contribute to debates regarding the future of the Commonwealth and to examine how the CSC itself can contribute to these goals.

On Saturday evening, three finalists delivered speeches outlining what they would do if they were the Commonwealth Secretary-General, as part of a selection process to choose one award holder as a representative to attend the Commonwealth People's Forum (sponsored by the Commonwealth Foundation), which immediately precedes the Commonwealth Heads of Governments Meeting (CHOGM) in Trinidad and Tobago this November.

Carol Holness, Commonwealth Scholar from South Africa studying MSc Human Rights at the London School of Economics, was nominated. She said, 'It is a great privilege to have been elected to attend the Commonwealth People's Forum. I am very grateful for this amazing opportunity and look forward to representing my fellow Commonwealth Scholars at this event'.

## FAITHS AND CIVIL SOCIETY NETWORK LAUNCH

The new Faiths and Civil Society Network was launched at a conference on 17-18 January 2009. Delegates outlined their individual views about the important issues surrounding faith in the public realm, and planned how the network might move forward.

## THE FUTURE OF COMMONWEALTH EDUCATION

The University of Oxford, in collaboration with the Council for Education in the Commonwealth and the Commonwealth Secretariat, hosted a two-day conference on 31 March-1 April 2009, to celebrate 50 years of Commonwealth educational cooperation and to discuss opportunities for further collaboration. Attendees included the Prime Minister of Namibia, as well as an array of politicians, High Commissioners and

representatives from universities, NGOs and Commonwealth organisations. Ten Commonwealth Scholars also attended the event and had the chance to contribute to the discussions and to interact with education specialists. The importance of such exchanges was highlighted by Naledi Pandor, the South African Minister of Education, who also gave special mention to the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan: 'The Plan, apart from providing a practical manifestation of collaboration, has also proved to be one of the most enduring and successful forms of Commonwealth partnerships'.



**Naledi Pandor** (second from right), South African Minister of Education, with Commonwealth Scholars from South Africa at the **Commonwealth education conference**

For more comprehensive reports on recent events, visit [www.cscuk.org.uk/news/eventreports.asp](http://www.cscuk.org.uk/news/eventreports.asp)



# COUNTRY PROFILE – MALAYSIA

*As well as playing host to the 17th CCEM in Kuala Lumpur in June, Malaysia has long played an important role in the CSFP. Here, we look at the administration of Commonwealth Scholarships in Malaysia, and learn about the national and international impact of its alumni.*

## ADMINISTRATION OF THE CSFP

The Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan is administered in Malaysia by two government departments: the Public Service Department and the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE).

The Public Service Department administers the nomination process for Malaysian candidates wishing to study in the UK, and the MOHE administers the application process for those wanting to study in Malaysia via the CSFP.

Malaysia offers 10 awards annually, with a typical breakdown of 3 places for PhD and 7 for Masters' awards. Countries that nominate candidates include Bangladesh, Cameroon, the Gambia, Malawi, Maldives, and Sri Lanka. The selection process is finalised by February; the selection committee typically comprises representatives from MOHE, the Minister of Higher Education, an official from the Prime Minister's department, and an official from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Saidatul Norkamilah from the MOHE said that Commonwealth Scholarships 'are an opportunity to allow Malaysians to study in the UK, and they are keen to undertake them. It also allows international students to study in Malaysia'.

## ALUMNI PROFILES

Malaysian alumni have made a wide contribution in areas such as academia, education, and public service. Alumni include:

- **Professor Wazir Jahan Karim**, Executive Director of the Academy of Socio-Economic Research Analysis and a member of the National Advisory Council for Women; formerly Director of the Women's Development Research Centre at Universiti Sains Malaysia.
- **Professor Bin Yaacob Hashim**, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Malaya.
- **Professor Md Ikram Mohd Said**, President of the Malaysian Natural Products Society, and former Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Universiti Kebangsaan.
- **Aureen Jean Nonis**, Trade Commissioner at the Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation, and formerly Assistant Secretary at the Ministry of Finance.



*Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia*

**Professor Gajaraj Dhanarajan**, currently Vice-Chancellor of Wawasan Open University, has had an eminent international career within education, as CEO of the Commonwealth of Learning, CEO of what is now known as the Open University of Hong Kong, and Secretary General of the Asian Association of Universities, amongst other posts and offices. As a vice-chancellor himself, he is only too aware of the rewards and difficulties in higher education. He believes that 'similar challenges face many Commonwealth countries – improving access without compromising quality', in a highly competitive global environment.

**Dr Lai Yoong Wong** held her Commonwealth Scholarship in the early years of the CSFP, in 1964. She was studying for a BSc at the University of Hong Kong when she took seminars with Professor R S Nyholm, then Head of the Department of Chemistry at University College London (UCL). This inspired her to apply for a Commonwealth Scholarship to pursue a PhD in Chemistry at UCL. Dr Wong remembers her Scholarship as providing a cosmopolitan and academically stimulating environment. 'During the time of my stay in UCL,

there were some 150 graduate students and postdoctoral fellows in its Chemistry department, from many Commonwealth countries and North America, all attracted by Professor Nyholm's Renaissance of Inorganic Chemistry. Thus, unknowingly, I was admitted into a department with much acclaim and tradition.' Dr Wong received the William Ramsay Memorial Gold Medal from UCL for her PhD thesis, and went on to enjoy an international academic career. Since retirement, she has worked as a senior fellow at several institutions, including the National University of Singapore and Nanyang Technological University.



**Dr Lai Yoong Wong**,  
*at her PhD graduation in 1968*



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

The CSC supports around 750 awards annually. Awards are funded by the Department for International Development (for developing Commonwealth countries) and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills in partnership with UK universities (for developed Commonwealth countries). The CSC also nominates UK citizens for scholarships to study in other Commonwealth countries under the CSFP.

The CSC makes available seven types of award:

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

The CSC is a non-departmental public body in its own right, and members are appointed in line with the Code of Practice of the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments. The Commission's secretariat is provided by the Association of Commonwealth Universities; financial management and welfare support for scholars is provided by the British Council.

The CSFP is an international programme under which member governments offer scholarships and fellowships to citizens of other Commonwealth countries. The Plan was established at the first Commonwealth education conference in 1959 and is reviewed by ministers at their triennial meetings – the only scholarship scheme in the world to receive such high-level recognition.

[www.cscuk.org.uk](http://www.cscuk.org.uk)