

# Social Entrepreneurship Contest Inspires Students to Start Businesses in Africa

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Social entrepreneurship competition runner-up and Institute of Education student Adam Lingson

A budding entrepreneur is heading to Africa to improve healthcare after her motivational training for nurses idea scooped the top prize in a social enterprise competition. Dr Natalie Prevatt won £500 for the business plan she submitted to the first 'Developing World Ideas Factory' run jointly by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), and the London International Development Centre (LIDC). Tanzanian Adam Lingson, an MA student at the Institute of

Education, won the £350 second prize for his plan to sell bamboo products.

The two-month programme offered social entrepreneurship skills, training and a business plan competition for the brightest ideas to improve lives in the developing world. Staff and research degree students from the six Bloomsbury Colleges (Birkbeck, Institute of Education, LSHTM, Royal Veterinary College, School of Oriental and African Studies, The School of Pharmacy) were invited to take part and invent solutions to tackle development problems. Nearly 40 students and staff expressed interest in the competition and six entrants made it through to the final judging panel on 23 April. The programme was coordinated by Enter-Rise – a consultancy group specialising in the development and delivery of entrepreneurship education and training.

## Improving nurses' motivation

The aim of the winning 'Motivational training for nurses' business plan is to provide a training package to be used by health services in resource poor countries. The training package is designed to help save lives by improving basic nursing (such as giving prescribed medications and checking patients) by monitoring, providing guidance and praise to boost the morale of nurses.

Dr. Prevatt, who is studying for a Diploma in Tropical Medicine and Hygiene at LSHTM, formed the business idea as a response to her experiences working as a doctor in Lesotho. Her plan combines health and education, and, therefore, very much reflects LIDC's emphasis on the benefits of interdisciplinary work. Dr Prevatt said: "I am thrilled to have won the first prize. The prize money is going to help me set up the programme which I hope to have running by the end of the year. A World Health Organization (WHO) report has identified low motivation among health workers as central to the problems with delivery of health care in African countries. No matter what aid is given it will not succeed if basic nursing care is lacking. I hope my plan will begin to help improve the motivation of nurses."

## **Bamboo business**

The second prize was awarded to Lingson, who is studying for an MA in Education and International Development, for his 'Bamboo for Development' plan. His ambitious project aims to support more than 200 residents in Rungwe District, Tanzania, to plant and use bamboo plants to increase income by selling bamboo handicrafts and wine, thereby marrying economic activities with environmental conservation. He said: "According to our research this project could be a giant solution to giant problems such as hunger, income poverty, and environmental degradation. Thank you so much for this initiative. The training and competition has opened up my eyes and I have learnt a lot. I am a changed person and I have been given the confidence to carry out my business plan."

The third prize, worth £150, went to Andrew Deacon, a research assistant at LSHTM. His idea is to improve diagnosis of the lethal human parasite *Leishmania*. He said: "The problem lies in the lack of specific and sensitive tests able to distinguish between the parasites which cause these diseases in a simple 'one-step' test. This novel test will identify the parasite allowing rapid definitive treatment."

## **Final reflections**

"Dr Quinton Fivelman, director of Enter-Rise and a research fellow at LSHTM, said: "The judges were impressed with the originality and variety of the business plans, and believe they have real potential to improve lives in the developing world. Entrepreneurs are essential drivers of innovation and progress, and are essential to grow the business world by harnessing opportunities. The Developing World Ideas Factory can be a catalyst for the creation of social enterprises in the developing world while stimulating interdisciplinary work. This was evident in the nature of the winning plans. We want to see this as skills development whereby students can gain support and future mentoring to turn their business ideas into a success. Universities are rising to the challenges of the knowledge economy and it's essential that we promote and nurture this through entrepreneurial skills training."