

Students Partnering for Impact Awards

by Robyn Alders and Philippa Smales

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Stephanie Matulin and Benson Hahambu (Murdoch University) with Robyn Alders (image: RDI Network)

At the recent [Research for Development Impact Conference](#) at the University of Sydney, we were pleased to award two outstanding student projects funding to undertake unique international development projects in countries in the Asia-Pacific region. The awards were made possible through the generosity of Mr Harold Mitchell through the [Mitchell Humanitarian Award](#).

The grants were awarded following an open application process which sought proposals submitted jointly by current students representing different countries – in the spirit of co-design and partnership.

The judging panel (consisting of representatives from the [RDI Network](#) and the University of Sydney, as hosts of the Conference) were encouraged by the quality of applications made from students around Australia and the region. A shortlist of the 5 most promising projects was made and all gave a short pitch during the [RDI Student Forum](#). Two winners were chosen from among these to be provided with financial support towards the implementation of their idea. The awarded projects will report back within 12 months.

The shortlist:

- Students from RMIT proposed empowering young people in both Australia and Vietnam through video communication technology to understand and advocate for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Building upon the power of narratives as tools for catalysing action, the project aims to encourage young people to expand their thinking to global possibilities, and to take on human-centred design.
- Students from the University of Sydney and BRAC University, Bangladesh sought to apply mobile application technology to address knowledge gaps regarding child and maternal nutrition in Bangladesh. The proposed app would disseminate essential dietary and nutrition information and advice to pregnant women, tailored

for different stages of the pregnancy and personal health requirements.

- Students at the Queensland University of Technology and Kathmandu University collaborated to propose completing a research project to understand the knowledge levels of students in Nepal regarding the causes and impacts of climate change. Using the findings, they planned to develop targeted school curriculum proposals addressing climate change, to be submitted to the national education authorities.

Winning ideas:

- PNG Education Network for Disaster Risk Reduction

Murdoch University students will seek to address low knowledge levels of disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies and systems in rural Papua New Guinea (PNG), by providing targeted training of existing and future teaching networks. They have identified that schoolchildren present as both particularly vulnerable in time of disaster, and also well-positioned to transmit DRR knowledge throughout communities. By educating teachers in DRR during their educational training, schoolchildren in rural areas will be receiving essential knowledge well into the future. The judges were impressed by the sustainability thinking behind this proposal, and agreed that DRR will be an ongoing and increasingly important challenge to address in PNG.

- Investigation of affordable clean energy solutions for off-grid rural communities in the Philippines

Students from the University of Technology Sydney and the University of the Philippines will aim to bring renewable energy solutions to off-grid, energy-poor communities in the Philippines. Through a combination of community education, market research and fostering of social enterprise, the project seeks to ideate businesses which can provide clean and affordable renewable energy solution to households, replacing an existing reliance on kerosene. The vision for the project is to see local entrepreneurial leadership address local problems with user-focused technology solutions. The judges appreciated the focus of this project on integrating results from current market research with social enterprise-led solutions.

We would like to thank all the students who worked hard to produce these proposals for the Award, and commend the high quality of submissions. The RDI Network and the University of Sydney congratulate the winners and look forward to reviewing the outcomes of these exciting co-designed projects.

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*The Research for Development Impact Network and the University of Sydney, hosts of the RDI Conference, would like to acknowledge the generous donation of Associate Professor Robyn Alders AO in making these Awards possible. Dr Alders was **awarded the 2017 Mitchell Humanitarian Award** in February this year, in recognition of her contribution to regional and international development.*

Author/s:

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Robyn Alders is a veterinarian and an Honorary Professor with the ANU Development Policy Centre, ANU Institute for Climate, Energy and Disaster Solutions and Veterinary Department of Infectious Disease and Global Health, Tufts University. She is also the Lead of the **OFFLU** Socio-Economic Working Group and Co-Chair of the Global Advisory Committee of the FAO-WOAH Peste des Petits Ruminants Global Eradication Programme.

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Link: <https://devpolicy.org/students-partnering-impact-awards-20170705/>