



**Press Release
19th April 2017**

She's no ordinary Gold Digger!

Geologist, Tshiamo Legoale Wins the FameLab South Africa competition: Taking African Science to the World

Tshiamo Legoale from Mintek, a global leader in mineral and metallurgical innovation, earned her spot as the national winner of the FameLab South Africa competition as she captivated the audience with her riveting 3 minute talk on phytomining, or in simpler terms, how we can harvest gold from wheat crops grown on mine dumps. The bubbly and energetic Tshiamo and the first runner-up, Nanji Shenj, also a researcher at Mintek, are both breaking stereotypes of women in the mining industry. Tshiamo, who joined Mintek in 2012, is an MSc Environmental Management student at the University of Free State (UFS) and holds a BSc Degree in Geology (UFS) and a certificate in Mineral Resource Management from Wits University. She competed against nine other finalists, selected from over 200 young researchers who participated in FameLab heats across the country. Tshiamo will now represent South Africa at the International FameLab competition at the Cheltenham Science Festival (UK) from the 5th-8th of June.

Michael Ellis, Science Communication Manager at SAASTA commented that "FameLab South Africa is an effective channel for developing local science communication talent and SAASTA is proud to partner in making this possible. FameLab is inspiring young scientists to talk about their science and to make their voices heard. Our hope is that these young scientists will continue to do so throughout their research careers." At the semi-finals which were hosted by Wits University, Professor Adam Habib, Vice Chancellor and Principal of Wits University commented that it is important for Africans to participate in the global knowledge economy and to develop the high level research and scarce skills required to foster inclusive development on the continent. "More importantly, we need to share our research stories in the public sphere and use our science-based evidence to influence policies that will ultimately benefit humanity."

Although the judges' announcement of the winner came as no surprise to the audience, following the thunderous applause on conclusion of her talk, she humbly commented that, "I am very grateful for the

opportunity that FameLab has given me and am excited that I am going overseas. But most importantly I am very humbled that my science has been recognised as being entertaining, important and relevant to society today.” She hopes her idea can assist impoverished communities with building a business case to beneficiate geological ore bodies, which are found in areas rich in natural mineral resources. “So this is one technological innovation that we plan to transfer to the communities that can use it. Hopefully in future this can help employ a few people – it will be fields of gold to harvest,” she said.

Runner-ups Nanji Sheni (an Engineer in training at Mintek) and Dr Sheetal Silal are both graduates of the University of Cape Town (UCT). Nanji holds an MSc from the UCT Center for Minerals Research (CMR) of the Department of Chemical Engineering. Her FameLab talk focused on mineral beneficiation or extending benefits from what would be regarded as mining waste, through the use of floatation in minerals processing. Nanji says, “I am passionate about positive change in Africa and especially our communities and I love the idea generation around creating African solutions to African problems.” Anisa Khan, Newton Fund and Higher Education Programme Manager at the British Council commented that, “the British Council is committed to creating opportunities for youth worldwide and through our work in science we hope to provide a platform for taking African science to the world and to support the co-creation of knowledge through new science and research partnerships with the United Kingdom.”

The 2nd runner up, Dr Sheetal Silal, is a senior lecturer and researcher in the Department of Statistical Sciences, Faculty of Science, at the University of Cape Town (UCT), where she completed both her MSc and Ph.D. Her FameLab talk and primary research area is in the mathematical modeling of infectious diseases with a particular focus on malaria elimination efforts in South Africa, Southern Africa, and the Asia-Pacific region. Through her research, she aims to analyse malaria transmission dynamics for policy advice. She is the Head of the newly formed research group Modelling and Simulation Hub, Africa (MASHA) based at the University of Cape Town, a group aimed to connect and train African mathematical modelers working in tropical diseases.

Should your institution wish to get involved in FameLab 2018, submit an expression of interest form available on the British Council, JiveMedia Africa or SAASTA websites or contact Anisa Khan at the British Council famelab@britishcouncil.org.za

FameLab in South Africa is made possible by a partnership between the British Council, the South African Agency for Science and Technology Advancement and Jive Media Africa.

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Participating Institutions in the 2017 heats included:

- University of Witwatersrand (Wits)
- Wits DST-NRF Centres of Excellence (in Paleosciences; in Strong Materials; and Mathematical and Statistical Sciences)
- UNISA
- Tshwane University of Technology

- Mintek
- Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)
- Central University of Technology (CUT)
- University of the Free State (UFS)
- University of Cape Town (UCT)
- The Academy of Sciences of South Africa (ASSAf)
- Square Kilometer Array (SKA)
- Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU)
- University of Limpopo
- The Mail and Guardian newspaper
- Sci-Bono Discovery Centre
- The Department of Science and Technology

Winners

- 1st place Tshiamo Legoale
- 2nd place Nanji Sheni
- 3rd place Dr Sheetal Silal

List of Finalists (excluding the winners)

- Tshepo Makgoba - CSIR
- Wynand van Lesenoord - Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University
- Michael Bodunrin – Wits University
- Saneliswa Magagula - UNISA
- Oluwasegun Kuloyo - University of the Free State
- Aviwe Matiwane - DST NRF Centre of Excellence in Palaeosciences
- Phylis Makurunje - DST NRF Centre of Excellence in Strong Materials

List of Semi-Finalists (excluding list of finalists and winners)

- Clarissa Van der Loo- University of Johannesburg (Academy of Sciences South Africa)
- Zanele Matsane- Central University of Technology (CUT)
- Otto Joseph- Rhodes University
- Vereese van Tonder- Square Kilometer Array (SKA) South Africa
- Mapula Razwinani and Ntombikazi Jojo- Tshwane University of Technology (TUT)
- Ursula Rohlwink- University of Cape Town (UCT)
- Mukundi Munyai- University of Limpopo
- Fulufhelo Mudau- University of South Africa (UNISA)
- Lungile Khambule- University of the Witwatersrand (Wits)

EDITORS' NOTES

About FameLab

FameLab® was started in 2005 in the UK by Cheltenham Science Festivals and is a successful model for identifying, training and mentoring scientists and engineers to share their enthusiasm for their subjects with the public. It is implemented by the British Council, together with local partners, in over 31 countries, including Mauritius, Uganda, the USA, Brazil, Thailand, Qatar and Kazakhstan to name a few. In SA, the competition is implemented in partnership between the British Council, the South African Agency for Science and Technology Advancement (a business unit of the National Research Foundation) and Jive

Media Africa. The competition has a strong capacity building element with a year-long training programme and heats hosted by various science, higher education and research institutions across the country. One semi-finalist is chosen from each of these heats. The prizes include science communication Master-class training for the 20 semi-finalists as well as a R5000 cash prize for the winner and R2500 each for the runners up. A highlight for the participants this year was the Master-class conducted by renowned BBC science journalist, producer and communicator, Quentin Cooper.

About the British Council:

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for educational opportunities and cultural relations. We create international opportunities for the people of the UK and other countries and build trust between them worldwide.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.britishcouncil.org.za/>. You can also keep in touch with the British Council through <https://twitter.com/zaBritish>

About Jive Media Africa:

Jive Media Africa creates innovative, cutting edge communications; grabbing attention and conveying crucial messages in accessible ways.

An award-winning multi-media company, Jive Media Africa produces media strategies and products that challenge and inform, making a difference in the areas of Science and Technology (Jive Science), Biodiversity Conservation (Jive Earth), Children in the context of HIV/ AIDS (Jive Children) and Human Rights (Jive People).

Jive Media Africa strategises the best combination of media for the message, and importantly, for the target audience.

For more information, please visit <http://jivemedia.co.za/>. You can also follow them on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/JiveMediaAfrica>

About SAASTA:

The South Africa Agency for Science and Technology Advancement (SAASTA) is a business unit of the National Research Foundation (NRF) with the mandate to advance public awareness, appreciation and engagement of science, engineering, innovation and technology in South Africa. SAASTA's contribution to the NRF's vision is to grow the pool of quality learners today who will become the scientists and innovators of tomorrow.

All science engagement programmes within the NRF reside under three key strategic areas that combine to form an integrated and seamless approach.

Through education we build up the supply of tomorrow's scientists and innovators.

Through communication we celebrate South African achievements in science and technology and build the public's appreciation of the benefits of science.

By growing the awareness of science through exploration, exhibitions and actual experience, we instil in people an enthusiasm about the wonder and application of the subject, while encouraging greater public engagement in SET issues.

By taking overall ownership of science advancement initiatives within the NRF and on a countrywide scale, SAASTA is responding to an organisational as well as national imperative.

For more information, please visit <http://www.saasta.ac.za/>.

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