

# Fame Lab

TALKING SCIENCE

## Press Release

9 June 2017

## South Africa takes Gold at International Science Festival!

South Africa gets the good news it's been waiting for. Golden girl and FameLab South Africa 2017 winner, Tshiamo Legoale, was crowned FameLab International champion last night at the Cheltenham Science Festival, in the UK.

In front of a packed audience, the 27 year old Tshiamo, a Geologist and researcher at Mintek, a global leader in mineral and metallurgical innovation, made South Africa proud by winning both the audience and the judges' vote.

"Winning it was a surprise to me because all 31 contestants had wonderful research. They all had really good presentations. I'm very grateful for all the support that I got from back home. Social media showed me a lot of love and support. When I felt unconfident they gave me likes and that boosted a bit of my confidence," said Tshiamo about her win.

As South Africa celebrates Youth Month in June, and the Department of Science and Technology hosts the Youth in Science and Technology Indaba today, Tshiamo represents hope for thousands of young South Africans to overcome difficult circumstances and follow careers in science.

In South Africa, "we have an estimated 17.7 million tons of gold waste. All this gold was mined out previously, but tiny amounts of this gold remains in the dumps," said Tshiamo who is researching a method of using wheat to harvest gold from these dumps. This innovative research could be a ground breaker for South Africa as it could provide socio-economic benefits for communities based around these dumps. Tshiamo describes this as a "win-win" as it solves an environmental problem and could benefit the poor.

Minister Naledi Pandor will open the Department of Science and Technology's Youth in Science Indaba today, targeting youth entrepreneurs, young grassroots innovators, captains of industry and youth in higher education. The Department of Science and Technology expects over 300 young people to attend the event.

British Council South Africa Country Director, Colm McGivern said that Legoale represented the best of South Africa. "South Africa's world beating young scientist Tshiamo represents all that's best about this country - brilliant, bright and set for a fine future. I'm so proud that British Council SA together with our partners SAASTA and Jive Media Africa can help her along the way. Huge congratulations to her from all of us - it's a big win for Africa on the world stage," said McGivern

Tshiamo arrives from the UK tomorrow, 10 of June at 07h55 at OR Tambo International Airport. The South African public and all supporters of women and youth in science are encouraged to welcome her back from her fantastic achievement.

## **Taking African Science to the World**

South Africa was one of three African countries to make it to the finals. Mauritius and Uganda, who were taking part in the competition for the first time were represented well by Roshnee Rakomar and Irene Kyomuhangi. These young female researchers are taking African science to the world and inspiring other young people to take up careers in STEM and advance science research and innovation.

You can watch the full video of the FameLab International Finals 2017 here to see Legoale claim her throne: <https://www.facebook.com/FameLabInternational/>. The event was hosted by the BBC's Quentin Cooper. Each contestant delivered a three-minute presentation on their chosen topic. Every presentation was judged according to the golden rule of the 3 Cs: content, clarity and charisma.

## **Your institution could have the next FameLab winner!**

FameLab South Africa 2018 Expressions of Interest are open. Tshiamo was part of the 2017 cohort of young researchers and scientists across South Africa who received training in science communication as part of the competition. The FameLab model engages research and higher education institutions to nominate researchers between the ages of 21-35 and who are working across science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects. This year the Square Kilometer Array (SKA) project, UNISA, the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), Wits University, and 10 other science and research institutions participated.

Institutions or organisations involved in science, technology, engineering, mathematics and innovation (STEMI) research, are invited to submit an expression of interest to host a heat for the 2018 competition cycle. Heats can be used to showcase your science and technology research within your organisation as well as an opportunity to build organisational capacity in science communication, through the training offered by FameLab SA partner, Jive Media Africa. Expressions of interest must be submitted on or before **15 June 2017**. Email [Famelab@britishcouncil.org.za](mailto:Famelab@britishcouncil.org.za) or visit [www.britishcouncil.org.za/famelab](http://www.britishcouncil.org.za/famelab) more information. Slots are filling up so submit your form early!

## **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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