

Global WISE Awards select South African as only African entrant

The WISE Awards, an international competition that seeks to identify and celebrate the best initiatives aimed at improving the education sector, has selected Partners for Possibility, a social change organisation focusing on under-resourced schools in South Africa, as finalist for 2016.



Louise van Rhyen, founder and CEO of Partners for Possibility

Every year a panel of judges and selectors choose 15 organisations from across the world and selects six for the WISE Award and a prize of \$20,000. This year the selectors have identified organisations from Canada, the US, Mexico, France, China, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Brazil, Spain, India, Paraguay and South Africa.

Created in 2009 by the Qatar Foundation, the WISE Awards have grown significantly in the past six years, receiving over 2,400 nominations from 144 countries. To date it has awarded 36 projects from countries as wide afield as Finland, the US, Australia, Spain and Morocco. Seven WISE Awards have been made to social enterprises on the African continent and only one from South Africa. The WISE Awards actively connect past winners of the Award to share insights and resources, with the aim of increasing their effectiveness in the education sector.

“The WISE Awards bring enhanced visibility to action oriented projects that have had a demonstrated impact in their communities and can set the standard for similar initiatives worldwide. Winners are encouraged to develop partnerships with others in the WISE community in order to scale their initiatives, measure their impact and explore new sources of funding,” says Stavros N. Yiannouka CEO of WISE.

South African social enterprise

Partners for Possibility (PfP) is a social change organisation in South Africa that seeks to create large-scale systemic change in under-resourced schools in South Africa. Unfazed by the size of the challenge – with some 20,000 schools being classified as underperforming or in crisis – PfP pairs the school principals of these schools with business leaders in a fully accredited and monitored programme of shared learning and change.

“We are excited to be counted among the finalists and we look forward to interacting with other organisations that work to improve the education sector,” says Dr Louise van Rhyn, CEO of Partners for Possibility.

“A school with complex problems cannot function properly or provide a safe learning environment without good school leadership. Unfortunately, many principals find themselves in their positions without any prior preparation or leadership training.

“Through our programme, these principals find support and motivation in the form of a business partner, who can help them specifically target the problems at their school for a long-lasting and far-reaching change,” says Van Rhyn.

International recognition for PfP

To date PfP has assisted 411 schools from Cape Town to Lephalale. In 2014, it received the Reconciliation Award from the Institute of Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) and Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu for its work in advancing reconciliation in South Africa.

In 2015 HR.com in Texas, United States identified the PfP leadership training programme for business leaders and principals as one of its Top 10 International Leadership Training programmes, listing PfP alongside global organisations such as IBM and FranklinCovey.

“We are humbled by the nomination and attribute it to the more than 950 passionate employees and volunteers that work together to improve the future of our children,” says Van Rhyn.

The final judging starts now and the six winners of the WISE Award will be announced in September 2016. For more information on the awards, go to www.wise-qatar.org.

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