

# Ship for World Youth

## – Building a global understanding

Recently, the HSRC’s Dr Firdous Khan returned from a ship-based international youth exchange programme along with 11 other young South African leaders. The Ship for World Youth programme was sponsored by the Cabinet Office of the Japanese Government and the South African team was part of more than 200 participants from 11 countries, first in Tokyo and then on board the Japanese Nippon Maru ship between 16 January and 4 March 2018.

“We met high-profile people and organisations that we would not ordinarily have crossed paths with, including the prime ministers of India and Sri Lanka as well as the vice-chancellors of the universities of science and technology in these countries,” said Khan, a post-doctoral fellow and research specialist in the HSRC’s Centre for Science, Technology and Innovation Indicators.

The programme was designed to give an introduction and in-depth understanding of various topics including economic development, burden of disease, inclusion and sustainability through expert-led workshops, discussions, courses and participant-led seminars.

### Building sustainable business

One course taught the participants how to map and start out their own sustainable businesses. “It not only focused on us or our business ideas, but also on what we are able to give back to society, which is the aim of a sustainable business. During this course, we worked in teams and competed to develop the best sustainable business concept.

“Education was the focus of the winning proposal. They aimed at connecting recycling companies and big companies to collect materials to make notebooks that could be designed by children from impoverished communities. The concept was environmentally friendly and proceeds from selling these notebooks would be reinvested to strengthen schools in these communities.”

Another suggestion involved erecting mobile classrooms built from building blocks that were produced from recycled materials.

“Some teams tackled bigger issues such as the energy crisis, but the emphasis was on projects that could be more productive in the short-term, a 1-3-year plan rather than a 5-10-year plan.”

### Forging a mutual understanding

Khan also attended a seminar called The Rise and Fall of Democracy. “As we discussed the structures of governance in different countries, we realised that people all around the world have similar issues. We just manage to deal with it in different ways. In one case, delegates explained how their country handles simultaneous governance by a king and parliament successfully. We were told by several delegates how such systems work and why they would not change it. It makes one step back and think about it.”

Khan said the programme broadened her global views and taught her key skills in leadership and project management that she can transfer to her current projects. “I had the opportunity to speak openly and publicly about global issues with like-minded individuals and with those with opposing views.

“I have also built a global network of connections with experts in various fields that are able to collaborate on future projects.”

Khan holds a PhD in Biotechnology and an MSc in Bioinformatics from the University of the Western Cape. She was selected for this programme by South Africa’s National Youth Development Agency and Japanese consulate after being named as one of the 2017 Mail & Guardian 200 Young South Africans in the Health Category.

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Dr Firdous Khan (front), Chipo Jay and Akiko Adaniya disembarking during the The Ship for World Youth programme, a ship-based international youth exchange programme.

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