

Young students from India and a Canadian teacher win worldwide competition for their solutions to climate change

Submitted by: BlueSky Education

Wednesday, 6 December 2023

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The winners were announced at a ceremony at COP28 in Dubai, the result of hundreds of ideas shared by students and teachers across the globe, all focused on addressing the climate crisis.

Oxford/Abu Dhabi: The Burjeel Holdings-Oxford Saïd Climate Change Challenge (<https://www.sbs.ox.ac.uk/about-us/school/sustainability/climate-change-challenge>) has announced the winners of its global competition. The winning idea and lesson plan were presented to judges, alongside the other finalists, this weekend, before the announcement was made at a ceremony at COP28 in Dubai.

The winners stood out among more than 600 applications from 43 countries, as part of the global challenge, launched by Saïd Business School and Burjeel Holdings earlier this year. The competition was supported by organisations as varied as Oxford University Press and the Eden Project.

Students aged 15-18 were asked to form teams and set out their big idea to address one of five challenges relating to climate change: air pollution, extreme weather, diseases carried by insects, food security and water scarcity. Meanwhile, high school teachers were challenged to set the agenda in the classroom, with lessons that raised awareness among students about the dangers of climate change, and encouraged them to think creatively about solving it.

The entries were reviewed by a judging panel made up of influential thought leaders, founders, CEOs and global entrepreneurs.

The winning team, Acquifer Guardians, comprised Aniba, Anika, Jasreen, Naina, and Sonali from New Delhi, India. They addressed water scarcity by presenting an effective drip irrigation solution.

'Drip irrigation helps farmers save water, but timing is crucial. Our motivation is to raise awareness and propose innovative strategies, such as the Bio-floc Arduino technology developed by the Atal Tinkering lab at our school, to combat water scarcity and climate change effects. Winning this global competition is thrilling, and it inspires us to persist in our efforts towards a sustainable future,' expressed the victorious team from Ryan International School, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi.

The runners-up were the Entofarm Team, consisting of Junhyeok, Gregor, Aiden, Dowon, and Jihan, a team of Korean boys living in different cities in South Korea, Indonesia and USA. Their idea focuses on revolutionizing farming to combat diseases carried by insects. The ECO2 Team, with members Gayathri, Trisha, Unnimaya, Elvina, and Nischala from GEMS Our Own English High School, Dubai, UAE, secured third place for their innovative approach to tackling air pollution. They propose converting CO₂ and ammonia directly into fertilizers, promoting sustainable, affordable, and effective access to fertilizers worldwide.

In the teacher category, Lucas Olscamp from Pearson School UWC, Vancouver Island, Canada, was declared the winner. His lesson plan focused on embedding Indigenous beliefs in teaching.

‘I’ve just been so inspired by the incredible visions and dreams for a better future conceived and shared by my fellow educators but most poignantly, the students themselves. I am honoured to win in the teacher category. I take inspiration from the Indigenous caretakers in Canada, their stewardship and deep connection to the non-human world shape my teachings. Recognizing the importance of reconciling our past before envisioning the future, I feel it’s my duty to raise awareness and provide tools for action in areas like peace, sustainability, and climate change,’ he said.

Laxmidevi Upadhyay from Udayachal High School in Mumbai, India, with a lesson plan centered on waste management, secured second place. Michael Jones, from Northfleet Technology College in Northfleet, United Kingdom, whose focus is on computer science and climate change, came in third position.

All three winning teams in the student category and the top teacher will now be invited to take up a coveted spot in bespoke programmes at Oxford Saïd next year. The runners-up in the teacher category will get to attend the program virtually. They will also gain access to a vibrant community of influential entrepreneurs and thought leaders in innovation and social impact from around the world.

Juliane Reinecke, Professor of Management Studies at Oxford Saïd and finalists’ judge, said: ‘The quality of entries we received from all over the world was very high and this took another step up for the finalists’ event here, this weekend. What stood out from the winning entries was the determination to make a meaningful contribution, reflecting a genuine commitment to environmental stewardship. This has been such an inspiring opportunity; to surface such bright ideas and meet the brilliant minds who came up with them.’

Professor Soumitra Dutta, Dean of Oxford Saïd, said: ‘This has been a truly global effort; from the outreach to students and teachers in all parts of the world, to the diversity of the entries we received. The competition leaves me full of hope for the future; there is such energy and ingenuity among students and educators in addressing climate change and the quality ideas we have seen as part of this challenge are inspiring.’

Dr. Shamsheer Vayalil, Founder and Chairman of Burjeel Holdings, added: ‘The overwhelming response to the Burjeel Holdings-Oxford Saïd Climate Change Challenge highlights the students and their teachers’ readiness to address climate change collectively. The entries have been of such high quality. COP28 is an important moment for the world to engage with the climate crisis and I’m proud to have been part of giving these young people a platform for their innovative solutions.’

Notes to editors:

You can read more about the winning students and the other finalists [here](#).

You can read more about the winning teacher and the other finalists [here](#).

For images of the finalists, please contact sharma@sbs.ox.ac.uk

To arrange an interview with spokespeople from Saïd Business School, Burjeel Holdings or any of the winners, please contact Jonny Stone at jonny@bluesky-pr.com or call 01582790704.

The full list of countries from which entries were received for the Climate Change Challenge: Iraq, Israel, Pakistan, United Kingdom, Sri Lanka, India, Armenia, Fiji, Canada, Romania, China (Including Hong Kong), Bulgaria, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Senegal, Moldova, Uganda, Serbia, Italy, UAE, Kazakhstan, North Macedonia, Egypt, USA, Refugee Camps (Jordan), Kenya, Lebanon, Vietnam, South Korea, Thailand, Bangladesh, Singapore, Greece, Ecuador, Albania, Turkey, Australia, Germany, Poland, Russia, Zimbabwe, Morocco, Philippines and Argentina.