

48 hours in Dubai: MPAers compete in the Hult Prize Regional Finals



I am the captain of **Team Kanekta** who competed in the Regional Finals of the biggest social entrepreneurship student competition in the world – the Hult Prize. It was created in partnership with **Clinton Global Initiative** and the **Hult International Business School** in order to nurture the next generation of **social entrepreneurs**.

Forming Team Kanekta

Team Kanekta participated in the Hult Prize competition with the hope of developing a sustainable and impactful social enterprise which addressed President Clinton's challenge: **how to double the income of 10 million people in 5 years?**

As an MPA student, I am well aware of the diversity and value of my classmates. Consequently, I chose to work with two of my great friends: **Arthur Kong** and **Salimah Kassamali**. The team also required somebody with a technological and financial background. We were able to find both in Alvis ... from the LSE MSc in Finance and Accounting. We all began working together in Michaelmas Term (September 2015). We designed Kanekta to be a platform **to connect slum dwellers which work in the elemental services (basic, unskilled and casual labour such as maids, drivers etc) with employers in the city**. The business model included:

- A rating system to build trust and avoid adverse selection (as learned in our **MPA course EC440**)
- A physical hub to bring access to those who do not own a phone
- Financial inclusion and personal aid training.

The overall premise of this platform was to help people land more jobs and advertise themselves, whilst helping their wage rates match the market value.

We first presented Kanekta's premise in the **Hult@LSE** competition (whose winner goes directly to the regional finals of their choice with all expenses covered) but unfortunately we did not win. However, at the same time we had also applied to the global online application and were selected to participate in the Dubai regional competition! Thanks to the support of the **Institute of Public Affairs**, we were able to participate and meet other social entrepreneurs from all over the world!



The 2 days regional finals in Dubai

Day 1 consisted of a campus tour, orientation sessions and the opportunity to meet some of our fellow competitors.

Day 2 in its entirety was dedicated to the regional finals. There were three rooms with team pitches in the morning and afternoon. If a team was not pitching in the morning, they were present in the audience and had their presentation in the afternoon. The teams were rotated in order to avoid direct competitors being in the room at the same time. This was to aid unbiased feedback. The pitches were ten minutes length in total: 6 minutes for the team's presentations and 4 minutes of questions from the judges. The judging panel consisted of teams who were pitching on an unrelated subject.

Once all of the presentations had been completed, two teams per each of the three rooms were selected for the final rounds. These teams were not disclosed until all participants were present in the theatre. As soon as a team was announced, they were immediately led to the stage to make their pitch for the final time in front of everybody. **The winning team's idea was to develop a company which transforms human waste into bricks for bio-fuel.**

After the winners were announced, all participants went to a banquet at the adjacent hotel of the Burj Al Arab. This was the final opportunity for networking. However, most people went home soon after dinner due to feeling exhausted from the competition.

Final thoughts

We did not win the competition but the **experience was incredible** and in complement with:

- The **LSESU Social Innovation Society**, which I have leading this academic year
- The **MPA curriculum**, especially the International Development stream
- The LSE course **MG438: Business Model at the Base of the Pyramid**, with which I travelled to Nairobi and consulted with a local social enterprise.



Until recently, I had no firm ideas of what I wanted to do once I had completed my MPA programme. However, on Saturday April 16, a devastating earthquake measuring 7.8 on the Richter scale hit the coast of my home country Ecuador. It killed more than 650 people and injured thousands. Now when I return to Ecuador in August, **I am going to develop EcuARise** (the new Kanekta) and help the earthquake victims reactivate their lives.



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