

**WAFA** WATER AIR FOOD AWARDS



# **THE WAFA STORY**

**Honouring the World's Silent Heroes**



*“It is our collective and individual responsibility to preserve and tend to the world in which we all live.”*

Dalai Lama



WAFA (Water Air Food Awards), founded in 2008 and headquartered in Copenhagen, is a forward-thinking, grassroots NGO committed to ensuring healthy water, air, food, and climate on planet Earth. And we do this in the simplest way possible - by identifying what's already working towards that end and shining a light on it.

Simply put, we are the Humanitarian Oscars.



We identify, acknowledge, and celebrate people whose heroic efforts are ensuring that life sustains on this troubled planet of ours. Our name for these environmental warriors? “Silent heroes” - the unrecognized, unheralded, and unsung pioneers around the world whose low tech, high impact solutions are making a profound difference - one village, one community, one town at a time.

Just like the Oscars are awarded to extraordinary people in specific categories of accomplishment, so are the Wafa Awards - four, to be more precise: water, air, food, and climate action. Why these four? Because they are the environmental DNA of the planet. Without access to healthy air, water, and food, and without a climate that supports healthy air, water, and food, millions of people will continue suffering and dying before their time.



Photo: John D. Liu



## Planetary Degradation by the Numbers, (August 2020)

- 846 million undernourished people in the world
- 18,000 people died of hunger today
- 555,000 deaths caused by water-related diseases this year
- 798 million people with no access to clean drinking water
- 7 million people die of air pollution every year
- 3,5 million hectares of forest loss last year
- 8 million hectares of desertification last year
- 24 billion tons of CO2 emissions this year
- 6,5 billion tons of toxic chemicals released into the environment this year



**More About the People We Serve:** There are two kinds of heroes in the world: fictional and real. Most fictional heroes - like Superman, Wonder Woman, and Batman - are well-known. Most real heroes are not. Unlike their classical Greek counterparts, they are not half-God, half-human. They are 100% human - ordinary people, against all odds, accomplishing extraordinary results. Invisible as they are to most of humanity, WAFWA is doing everything possible to shine a light on them. Busy as they are with saving planet, we have gotten busy taking up their cause - calling attention to their ingenuity, courage, and commitment.

Our hope? That what these amazing people are doing and how they are doing it will ignite everyday heroism in every village, town, and city around the world. **“Think global, act local”** is our motto. Waiting around for governments and corporations to fix the world's problems has not worked and, if the latest pandemic is any indication, is unlikely to work any time soon.

What's needed is bottom up, grassroots solutions - environmental, community-based breakthroughs that scale and replicate. That's what WAFWA's work is all about.



**Our Vision:** “Healthy water, air and food for everyone on a healthy planet.”

**Our Mission:** “Create a global awards platform to celebrate the sustainable innovations of silent heroes everywhere.”

**Our Roots:** It all started in 2006 when Prem Rawat, Founder of The Prem Rawat Foundation's *Food for People Program* was visiting a small village in Northern India. There he witnessed children spending their days stealing food from rats' nests to feed themselves and their starving families. Think about *that* for a moment - children stealing from rat's nests in order to survive. That singularly stark moment sparked, in Prem's mind, the idea for WAFA - an idea he subsequently reached out to Tina Lindgreen (WAFA's Executive Chairperson) to transform into reality.

Explains Prem: “I know there are a lot of people who do a lot of innovation to help their local communities. But often, these people receive no recognition. They are the *silent heroes*. My idea is to acknowledge them and provide some assistance so that they can have the encouragement they need to continue their people & planet-saving efforts. Our goal, simply put, is to *inspire the good in people*.”



**Our Award Winners:** Since 2010, WAFA has given 14 Awards to silent heroes from ten different countries: Jordan, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, South Africa, Nicaragua, China, Nepal, Haiti, India, and Canada. Award-winners have been chosen from 33 finalists from a group of 74 pre-selected candidates among 401 applicants from 82 countries. The awards and recognition our award winners have received has enabled many of them to attract grants, government support, corporate support, donations, volunteers, and the kind of good will that has enabled them to continue scaling and replicating their efforts.

**Media coverage:** Stories of WAFA's Silent Heroes enjoy global reach. 84 million people have had the opportunity to learn about the good news. Especially national media in Silent Heroes' home countries have been thrilled to feature their stories.



## What Our Award Winners Say:



**Nicaragua:** “On behalf of our project's beneficiaries, the Fuprosomunic team, and the entire country of Nicaragua, we wish to express our deepest gratitude for the work WAFA is doing around the world, discovering and recognizing the work of organizations like ours. Despite our modest resources, we provide simple and practical solutions for families to better their home life and adapt to the new challenges posed by global warming. Our work is not easy, but we move forward with courage and determination. The worldwide recognition that WAFA offers us makes our work visible to other nations. It also infuses us with enthusiasm, strength and empowerment to continue doing what we do with joy and hope for a better world for all of us. Thank you again for your noble work and wish you great success in your endeavours.”

## What Our Award Winners Say:



“ **South Africa:** “Droughts ravaged South Africa. Staff and students teamed up to improve water usage, conservation and recycling. Ebomvini Primary School saved 150,000 litres of water, organized a water festival to educate our community, and obtained 75 water conservation pledges. Recognized as South Africa's top Water Explorer team by an expert sustainability panel, our school appeared on South African television and radio before an audience of millions.

EPS representatives went on to represent South Africa at the International Water Explorer event in London, networked with many other schools, and won the Innovation and Student's Choice Award. Since we won the WAFA award in 2018, we have travelled to London where our networking efforts with other school helped us develop our project further. Millions of South Africans have been positively impacted since our appearance on national television. Our project has subsequently been duplicated by other schools. Local area contacts have also benefitted from us receiving the WAFA Award. Our local Municipality, acknowledged the WAFA award to be one of the greatest achievements by a school under their management.”

## What Our Award Winners Say:



“ **Nigeria:** In 2011, a poor, pregnant, traumatized young school girl approached her 22 year old school teacher, Chukwudi Anyanaso, and asked for his support so she could start a fish farm - the only way she could think to earn the money she needed to support her unborn child. Chukwudi, sensing the moment, was able to provide just enough funding for the mother-to-be to turn her idea into a reality. And so began the People and Planet Life Foundation, a grassroots organization with one goal in mind - to eliminate rural poverty and hunger among the women farmers of Nigeria. Today, eight years later, sparked by the vision by one silent hero and the team he created, 749 women, in Nigeria have established their own fish farms. PPLF's goal? 43,000 fish farms and women - l e a d e n t e r p r i s e s b y 2 0 3 5 .

Explained Mr. Anyanaso, "The Wafa prize money we received allowed us to scale up our community fish farm and add 800 fishes. It also enabled our women farmers to extend their knowledge to 120 other poor, rural women in the area. Additionally, we've been able to fund the creation of a 10,000-capacity catfish farm for 200 women in a nearby community. Our plan, going forward, is to inform other like-minded people, in our country, how they can also create a positive impact in their own communities. Wow! Thank you a million times Wafa!"

**Our Awards Process:** All of our outreach campaigns are grassroots. Months before a Wafa Awards ceremony, we begin a global search for nominees via social media - i.e. our website, newsletter, mailing list, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Google ads, blogs, and the networks of our sponsors, supporters, patrons, and other NGOs. We also send out press releases.

Our goal is a simple one - to identify as many viable nominees around the world as possible, including the most remote locations. Nominees then get an opportunity to make their case for why they deserve a Wafa Award - and they do this by submitting videos, slideshows, photos, success stories, reports, and testimonials, all of which are featured on Wafa's website.

Once accomplished, Wafa's international review board enters into a rigorous process of vetting each nominee, according to seven criteria: innovation, sustainability, empowerment, scalability, replicability, impact, and quantifiable results (for at least two years). Twelve finalists are then selected and featured on our website. That's when our social media team gets the word out and a worldwide voting process begins. The finalist in each category who receives the most votes is declared the winner. Following that, Wafa organizes an Award Ceremony, either virtual, in a major city, or at winners' project site - an event that is sometimes live streamed around the world.





## Recognizing and Promoting Exceptional Sustainability Pioneers

**WAFWA's Relationship with Award Winners:** WAFWA's mission is to provide the world's silent heroes with the recognition needed to attract support to their sustainability initiatives. Our efforts significantly increase the odds of award winners receiving support from governments, corporations, research centres, philanthropists, and grant giving organizations. WAFWA *does not and will not* provide consulting services of any kind. Our business model, like the Oscars, is simple - **recognize greatness**. That's it. Just like the Oscars does not produce films, write scripts, fund films, or consult with filmmakers, WAFWA does not get involved with inner workings of the projects we recognize.

Although we have been asked several times to partner with think tanks, universities, and government agencies, that is not our work. Simply put, we create the platform upon which the Earth's silent heroes can take their stand.

**Our Patrons:** To date, Wafa has secured the support of four very well-connected movers and shakers - highly respected visionaries who have a deep commitment to the healing of mother Earth, both physically and metaphysically.



**His Highness Tengku Amir Shah Ibni Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah Al-Haj, Raja Muda: Crown Prince of Selangor State, Malaysia**



“I congratulate Wafa for seeking out exceptional sustainability pioneers in Malaysia. It is my fervent hope and dream that many of Malaysia’s corporations will come forward to form partnerships to scale the outstanding initiatives of Wafa’s silent heroes.”



**HRH Princess Basma bint Ali of Jordan**



“Even one small person can make a change, and I have seen this in all the Wafa finalists. The work you are doing is a huge inspiration to me – work that is not just limited to your own geographical location, but is happening all over the world. Thank you.”

**Our Patrons:** To date, Wafa has secured the support of four very well-connected movers and shakers - highly respected visionaries who have a deep commitment to the healing of mother Earth, both physically and metaphysically.



**Prem Rawat: Founder of the Peace Education Program, Food for People, and The Prem Rawat Foundation.**



“There is something phenomenal about Wafa’s efforts to reach out and recognize the world’s silent heroes – exceptional pioneers committed to restoring their communities and making a lasting difference in the world.”



**Dr. Virginia Li: Research professor at UCLA Fielding School of Public Health. Visiting professor at Kunming Medical University. Honorary professor of Guangdong Medical University.**



“Wafa’s commitment to the improvement of water, air and food around the world is so impressive, giving hope and joy to future generations. Right on!”

**Our Team:** WFA's team of 32 volunteers hail from ten different countries: Canada, Denmark, India, Italy, Malaysia, Morocco, Portugal, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey and United States. And while the cultural heritage of our volunteers varies widely, they all share one thing in common - a heartfelt sense of urgency to make the world a better, healthier place for everyone.



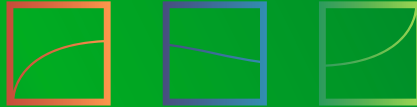


**Looking Ahead:** Building on our many successes so far, WFA's strategic plan includes the following growth initiatives in 2020 and beyond:

- Present awards at UN COP 26: Climate Change Summit 2021 (Glasgow, Scotland)
- Identify silent heroes in all 196 countries
- Initiate annual Highlight Award Celebrations
- Add patrons from every country in the world
- Launch a partnership with Fridays For Future
- Create Youth Climate Ambassadorships with schools in Denmark, Australia, & the US
- Double our volunteer base

“*Earth is what we all  
have in common.*”

Wendell Berry



SHARE SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS



**Wafa** WATER AIR FOOD AWARDS

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