

Global Citizen and the Waislitz Foundation Announce Recipients of the 2026 Global Citizen Waislitz Awards

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Smart Israel, Founder and CEO of
Smartel Agri Tech
[Global Citizen](#) Waislitz Grand Prize
Award Winner

Diana Yousef, Founder and CEO of
change:WATER Labs
Global Citizen Waislitz Disruptor Award
Winner

Oghenekevwe William Emadago,
Founder and COO, Girlified LTD
Global Citizen Waislitz People's Choice
Award Winner

Global Citizen, the world's largest
movement to end extreme poverty,
and the [Waislitz Foundation](#), working
to create a positive impact locally and

globally through innovative projects that empower individuals to make a difference, today announced the recipients of the 2026 Global Citizen Waislitz Awards. Smart Israel, Founder & CEO of Smartel Agri Tech was named as the winner of the 2026 Global Citizen Waislitz Grand Prize Award. Diana Yousef, Founder and CEO of change: WATER Labs receives the Global Citizen Waislitz Disruptor Award, and Oghenekevwe William Emadago, Founder and COO, Girlified LTD, receives the Global Citizen Waislitz People's Choice Award.

From growing food without soil, to waterless sanitation and turning agricultural waste into affordable and accessible sanitary pads, this year's winners are developing practical solutions to help end extreme poverty.



Smart Israel, Founder & CEO of SMARTEL AGRI TECH;
the Global Citizen Waislitz Awards grand prize winner

Now in its twelfth year, the [Global Citizen Waislitz Award](#) continues to recognize individuals taking transformative action to address extreme poverty and create lasting change in their communities. With a total of USD \$300,000 awarded annually, each of the three prize winners receives USD \$100,000 to further advance their organization's work. Applicants are evaluated on individual merit across five key criteria: global citizenship, proof of concept, disruption, scalability, and adaptability.

To date, the awards have honored 35 changemakers from around the world including Bangladesh, Colombia, India, Kenya, Malawi, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda, the United States and more, with the Waislitz Foundation disbursing over USD \$2.65 million in support of grassroots solutions to end extreme poverty.

"The Global Citizen Waislitz Award continues to remind us that some of the most powerful solutions to global challenges are being created by entrepreneurs and community leaders closest to those challenges," said Alex Waislitz OAM, Chairman and Founder of the Melbourne-based Waislitz Foundation. "Since 2014, the Waislitz Foundation and Global Citizen have partnered to support remarkable leaders creating change in their communities. Over the past 12 years, we have recognized 35 remarkable young leaders from 15 countries, each representing the ingenuity, determination and creativity needed to build a more equitable future. The Waislitz Foundation is proud to champion this year's winners and provide the resources needed to help them expand their impact and reach more communities around the world."

"For twelve years, our partnership with the Waislitz Foundation has enabled us to identify, support, and scale the work of exceptional leaders creating meaningful impact in their communities," said Simon Moss, Co-Founder & COO, Global Citizen. "This year's winners are creating remarkable impact across food security, sustainable sanitation and women and girls' health, from solutions they designed for the communities they serve. Together with the Waislitz Foundation, we are proud to help these leaders take their impact even further and accelerate progress toward a world free from extreme poverty."

Global Citizen Waislitz Grand Prize Winner: Smart Israel, Nigeria

Smart Israel is a Nigerian innovator and entrepreneur and the Founder and CEO of Smartel Agri Tech. Growing up in Nigeria's Middle Belt, he witnessed how resource conflict, displacement and climate change fuelled hunger and malnutrition in his community. Inspired by these experiences, he founded Smartel, a climate-tech enterprise enabling climate-vulnerable communities to grow food without soil in almost any environment through AI-enabled, solar-powered hydroponic systems. Smartel has deployed more than 3,000 systems, helping thousands of farmers and families gain sustainable access to nutritious food. The Global Citizen Waislitz Grand Prize Award will enable Smart Israel to reach 5,000 more households with affordable, climate-smart food production and expand Smartel's community hydroponic hub model.

Global Citizen Waislitz Disruptor Award Winner: Diana Yousef, United States of America

Diana Yousef is the Founder and CEO of change:WATER Labs. While working for NASA, Diana

realized astronauts face the same challenge as half the world's population: they cannot simply flush away waste. No other invention has saved more lives than the flush toilet, yet 4.2 billion people still can't access one, because they lack water or sewer infrastructure. Diana and her team developed the "iThrone", a waterless, sewerless toilet that rapidly shrinks waste by evaporating its water content, making safe sanitation cheaper, cleaner and more deployable beyond the limits of infrastructure. iThrone toilets have already improved safe toilet access for more than 20,000 people across Uganda, Panama and the United States. The Global Citizen Waislitz Disruptor Award will help Diana scale iThrone distribution to millions more people by next year, accelerating the mission to make safe, sustainable sanitation possible for everyone, everywhere.

Global Citizen Waislitz People's Choice Award Winner: Oghenekevwe William Emadago, Nigeria
Oghenekevwe William Emadago is an O'Shaughnessy Fellow, PhD researcher, and co-founder and COO of Girlified. Growing up in Northern Nigeria, he saw first-hand how girls miss school simply because they could not afford or access sanitary pads. Determined that no girl should have to choose between her education and her period, he founded Girlified, transforming agricultural waste into affordable and accessible sanitary pads that address both period poverty and plastic pollution. Since 2021, Girlified has produced over 2.8 million sanitary pads and reached more than 70,000 women and girls. The Global Citizen Waislitz People's Choice Award will help Oghenekevwe scale this innovation to reach 10 million women and girls annually by 2030.

Previous Global Citizen Waislitz Grand Prize Award winners include:

Dysmus Kisilu, Founder and CEO of Solar Freeze

Peter Njeri, CEO of Mega Gas Alternative Energy

Kristin Kagetsu, Co-Founder and CEO, Saathi

Bina Shrestha, Co-Founder Build up Nepal

Haroon Yasin, Co-Founder and Chairperson of Orenda

Charlot Magayi, Founder and CEO of Mukuru Clean Stoves

Koketso Moeti, Founder and Executive Director of amandla.mobi

Caitlin Barrett, CEO of Love Mercy Foundation

Tabitha Mpamira-Kaguri, Founder and Executive Director of EDJA Foundation

Wilma Rodrigues, Founder, and CEO of Saahas Zero Waste

Clarisse Uwineza, for her work converting organic waste into fertilizer in Rwanda

Twesigye Jackson Kaguri, Director of Nyaka AIDS Orphans Project, working to make education more accessible to AIDS orphans in Uganda

Anoop Jain, Founder of Humanure Power, for his work in rural India building sanitation facilities

Osel Boateng, Founder & Executive Director, OKB Hope Foundation, to expand health care access in Ghana

For more information about the 2026 Waislitz Global Citizen Awards, please go to

www.globalcitizen.org/en/programs/waislitz-award/

Vista Kalipa

OnPoint PR

vista@onpointpr.co.za

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