**Mission and Objectives 125 words**

SimPPL (https://simppl.org) is a nonprofit rebuilding trust on the social internet. We empower youth changemakers to develop and deploy responsible computing tools to advance information integrity. We identify, measure, and mitigate the effects of misleading information online. Our staff lead projects across 20+ civil society, government, academia, and newsrooms in 6 countries including the United Nations.

**Describe the nominee’s development work and how it contributes to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 500 words**

**Description of Development Work**

**The description should include at least the following:**

* **Background and context (how and when the project was started)**
* **Role of the nominee in the project (Founder, Co-Founder, President, Team Lead etc.)**
* **The project’s main activities**
* **The target audience/group(s), e.g. young women, rural communities, persons with disabilities etc.**
* **How is it funded?**
* **How is project impact measured?**
* **If applicable, highlight any noteworthy work of the nominee which is addressing the social, economic or developmental challenges caused by the COVID-19 global pandemic.**

SimPPL rebuilds trust on the social internet. Founder Swapneel Mehta is an expert on misinformation, researching platform governance as a postdoctoral associate at BU and MIT. His Ph.D. focused on cross-platform interventions to limit the spread of online misinformation. He worked for Twitter, with Meta and Google, and is a community advisor to the leading policy think tank, the Integrity Institute. His co-founder and Treasurer Dhara Mungra joined in 2022, holds an MS in Data Science, worked for Fortune 50 clients on audience analytics and measurement at Bombora, and has published top-tier AI research. SimPPL started out with funding from the NYC Media Lab focused on building AI tools for journalists and grew out into projects in misinformation and media literacy. SimPPL’s work involves responsible computing education and our projects are led by a number of talented undergraduate fellows that we have trained in annual programs. Even prior to SimPPL, Swapneel has been training and mentoring students for the past 8 years starting with programming and ML research leading into responsible technology deployment at SimPPL. The student-run organizations he started are still active (https://djunicode.in, <https://nyu-mll.github.io/nyu-ai-school-2024>), providing long-term training to 700+ (and involving 1000+ students in workshops) at 20+ engineering institutes in India and over 2000 URM-identifying students in the US. Initial programs catered to non-CS, and non-STEM majors from marginalized backgrounds, and provided stipends to those from lower SES. NYU has institutionalized our outhouse program into an inhouse course and the Finnish government has reached out to discuss a national partnership! Swapneel co-led grants for his alma mater to be the only institution to win both a Mozilla Responsible Computing Challenge and Google exploreCSR grant among international institutions, in 2023, which supports SimPPL’s work. We are also funded by Wikimedia, the Goethe Institut, several awards at MIT, and contracts with Deutsche Welle (Germany), Jagran Media (world’s 5th largest newspaper), and others. We work with the United Nations and I have delivered talks at UNESCO panels and to members at the office of the secretary general.

At SimPPL, we cultivated a mentor and client network spanning the US, EU, UK, India, and Bangladesh for projects so that we focus on community-informed solutions for the erosion of online trust! Impact depends on the project but at the organizational level is tracked via publishing rigorous research papers (16+) at top-tier venues, highlighting metrics from the data we collect and analyze (0.5 billion posts from 6 social platforms), number of users served (5,000 by March 2025), no. of students trained (500 fellows, several thousand attendees at workshops), media visibility and mentions (listed on CV, reaching 100M+ audiences), USD 200,000+ raised in grants and awards, takedowns of threat actors we initiate by platforms like Meta, Twitter, and most importantly in early conversations with client organizations to identify deliverables that we meet at the end of each project and include project-specific impact metrics.

**Please describe the impact or results of the nominee’s development work/project, and how the nominee inspires others. 250 words**

**Impact of Development Work**

* **Based on the target audience/group, how many people has the project reached?**
* **Please provide clear examples of the difference the nominee’s work has made to their target audience(s).**
* **Highlight the positive change that has resulted in the wider community/nation/region as a result of the nominee’s work.**
* **If applicable, highlight any noteworthy impact of this work which is addressing the social, economic or developmental challenges caused by the COVID-19 global pandemic.**

**Explain why the nominee deserves to receive the Commonwealth Youth Award for Excellence 2025. 250 words**

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SimPPL has been responsible for the reporting of 400,000 harms-causing accounts on Twitter, the takedown of 600 political targeting and gendered harassment promoting accounts on Meta, resulting in 100M+ views. Our work was featured on national news, by international broadcasters, invited to the UNESCO World Press Freedom Day panel on combating disinformation, and awarded by MIT, Google, Amazon, and others. We have significantly improved educational programs for students at 22+ educational institutions across India, serving several hundred students and winning awards being the only organization across the world that is supported by both Mozilla and Google via their responsible computing focused grants (RCC India, exploreCSR award respectively) in 2023! The broader change we have driven is opening the doors for students to build technological solutions and conduct rigorous research with three of Swapneel's mentees starting their Ph.D. in the US, focused on global issues pertaining to misinformation, machine learning, and human-computer interaction. His students have been selected into graduate programs at NYU Courant, Georgia Tech, UCSD, USC, Oxford, Columbia, and other top programs.

**Achievements and Milestones**

* **Please mention any outstanding personal accomplishments or unique contributions the nominee has had in achieving the SDGs through their work.**
* **Please provide clear examples of key milestones the nominee has achieved.**
* **Has the nominee received any local, national or international awards or recognition for their work?**
* **Have there been any other outstanding achievements from their past work?**

Swapneel is incredibly driven to employ technology for social good and to create a platform to educate and empower young changemakers like himself, receiving Economic Times India's Top 33 Engineers in 2018. He brings a diverse set of experiences to the table as someone with decades of lived experience in India, Switzerland prior to the US where he won awards from Oxford and Google Cloud for his research. He grew SimPPL, since 2021, into a team working with prominent international newsrooms, nonprofits, and the UN, reaching millions of people. The innovative technology they have built at SimPPL is informed by feedback from underserved communities whom they spent months interviewing. His work with students has resulted in SimPPL winning the inaugural Mozilla Responsible Computing India Award, and Google’s exploreCSR award--the first ever institution to do so. He works with policymakers to advise them on regulatory concerns for the Digital Services Act and algorithmic transparency efforts and has delivered talks to the office of the UN Secretary General as well as at the UNESCO World Press Freedom Day. He was named one of the Future Today Institute’s ‘People to Watch in AI and Local News’ alongside prominent scholars like Princeton’s Arvind Narayanan. He serves as a Google Research Innovator, Belfer Fellow, and Community Advisor to the Integrity Institute, a well-known think tank. Earlier this week he was recognized as one of 44 Atlantic Dialogues Emerging Leaders for the global majority, among 1300 exceptional applicants.

**Please describe the future plans of the initiative and how the nominee plans to sustain or expand the scope and impact of their work 250 words**

**Sustainability and Continuity**

* **Outline the next steps for the nominee’s work, and how they intend to achieve this.**
* **Highlight how receiving the Commonwealth Youth Award will contribute to helping them achieve their future plans.**

We have been informally notified that Mozilla plans to extend our support to scale our “Responsible Computing Partnership” programs for students. NYU has already converted our NYU AI School program into an inhouse, long-term program, and NYU and MIT invited us to mentor capstone projects so we have plans to expand this into a full-fledged academic partnerships coalition to advance Responsible AI development. See the letters of support for this that indicate organizational commitments to advance our work. In fact, after presenting to various policymakers over the past 2 years, we also received interest and started early conversations with the Ambassadors of Finland and Denmark respectively, to scale our Responsible Computing Partnerships programs into international institutions. We aim to partner with the Columbia Trust and Safety Tooling Consortium and have already drafted a joint grant proposal that we expect to raise funding for, co-authored with the folks at Columbia. The Institute for Security and Technology (IST), a leading international civil society organization reached out to partner on GenAI tools to convey policy learning to the community and we are working with them to deploy policy literacy technology to an initial set of 250 practitioners in trust and safety policymaking. On the product end, we are aiming to release two successful at-scale deployments of information auditing systems for public use that are commercially viable and can benefit smaller newsrooms, nonprofits, fact-checkers to share accurate and verified information governed by local stakeholders, rolling it out to 1000 users in a pilot released on WhatsApp. We use GenAI agents to provide elections information governed by electoral staff and local government officials in a transparent and accountable manner for public benefit. This is a partnership with Deutsche Welle focused on Eastern European Countries and a partnership with Jagran News focused on India given they run the world’s largest Hindi newspaper.

**Tell us about whether and how your project contributes to peacebuilding through faith and/or by promoting common values?**