

Shared Interest Annual Awards Dinner Honors South African Finance Minister, Merck
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NEW YORK, April 26, 2012 /PRNewswire/ -- Shared Interest's 18th Annual Awards Dinner, held on April 23 at New York's Gotham Hall, honored Pravin Jamnadas Gordhan, South African Minister of Finance, for his skill and accomplishments in strengthening South Africa's economy and moving the country towards stable, equitable growth during the global economic crisis.

Each year, [Shared Interest](http://www.sharedinterest.org), a leading New York-based nonprofit social investment fund, presents awards to individuals and institutions whose initiatives promote and protect human rights, gender equality, economic justice, and democracy in South Africa.

More than 350 distinguished U.S. and African leaders attended this year's black-tie affair, hosted by award-winning broadcaster and BET host Ed Gordon. The evening celebration raised funds for Shared Interest to provide black South African entrepreneurs with access to credit and technical support to launch small businesses, create jobs and build secure new communities.

Shared Interest presented the 2012 Corporate Award to Merck (known as MSD outside of the United States and Canada) for its commitment to building healthy communities in South Africa. Merck and Shared Interest have forged a partnership to support small agricultural business owners gain access to capital and technical skills and expertise to create social and economic change.

"The decision to join forces with Shared Interest was an easy one for Merck," said Adam Schechter, president, Global Human Health, Merck. "We are proud to support their efforts to enable small agricultural business owners to obtain the loans, skills and technical expertise that they need, to boost health and economic empowerment in the critical part of the world."

New York business leaders Karen and Phillip Berry, longtime supporters of Shared Interest, were recognized for forging partnerships to expand opportunity in South Africa.

The awards dinner highlighted uplifting images and success stories of Shared Interest's pioneering clients. "Shared Interest recognizes that for all too many black South Africans, apartheid's legacy continues: a job, a house, the chance to start a business and build economic security for a family and community remain beyond reach," said Donna Katzin, executive director of Shared Interest. "Shared Interest works with Themban International Guarantee Fund to provide these opportunities."

The newly-launched *Next Generation Campaign* to expand access to capital and capacity development to 500,000 black entrepreneurs in South Africa and other Southern African countries was celebrated at the event.

www.sharedinterest.org

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