

ALUMNI PROFILE

Joint Japan/World Bank Graduate Scholarship Program

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—ANJU GAUTAM

ANJU GAUTAM, NEPAL
KIT—Royal Tropical Institute—
Vrije Universiteit (2022)
The Netherlands



What motivated you to pursue a career in a development-related field?

After earning my bachelor's degree, I worked as a clinical nurse focusing on practicing the skills I acquired in the nursing school. After a few years of practice, I observed that many children were facing health problems that were preventable locally. This inspired me to transition from clinical care to community engagement. This was not an easy process, as I was not formally trained in public health or development. Nevertheless, I continued to pursue my goal by hands-on learning of necessary knowledge, and skills to deliver better outcomes. While working in health development project of Nepal Red Cross, I was able to contribute to increasing awareness among community people, improving technical skills of local healthcare providers, and supporting local health planning in rural areas which altogether was improving health of many mothers and children. These tangible changes further encouraged me to pursue graduate studies that could bring me closer to health development field.

What has been the most rewarding and challenging parts of your study abroad experience?

In addition to acquiring new knowledge and skills, immersing myself in a different culture and interacting with people from various backgrounds with disparate views was immensely rewarding. It enabled me to reflect on my own culture and values while also fostering strong personal and professional relationships.

Starting a student life after being away from school for many years, while settling in a completely new

place, was indeed challenging for me. But taking initiatives to make new friends, sharing my problems with academic advisors, and keep up problem solving attitude got me through my college with great academic results.

How will the scholarship help you to advance in your professional career?

Before my graduate study, I had worked for various themes such as maternal child health, WASH, quality health service, health emergency preparedness, Nutrition, HIV, SRHR, and Menstrual Hygiene Management at community level. This scholarship helped me gain foundational knowledge of health policy and health systems, preparing me to contribute professionally in tackling bigger challenges in public health of Nepal. At present, I possess both skills and credentials required for more competitive positions in public health sector.

As an alumnus, what advice would you offer to others who are considering applying for the JJWBGSP?

For anyone considering applying to the JJWBGSP, I would strongly suggest familiarizing yourself with the eligibility criteria. This is a highly competitive program that seeks out highly motivated professionals, so it is important to take the time to reflect on your journey and what drives you as you may have a unique story to tell. Additionally, it is important to give yourself and any potential referees sufficient time to prepare your application and recommendations. Your essay answers will also demonstrate your communication skills. Also, consider the whole application process as a learning event.