

THE VOICE SECONDMENT PROGRAM

The World Bank Group - Voice Secondment Program (VSP) Newsletter Is Here!

Graduation of 15th Cohort – July 7, 2019



Welcome to the first edition of the VSP Newsletter.

We are very excited to keep our VSP Alumni updated about various developments and initiatives under the Program. We are counting on your support to provide us with updates as well, including career development news and any other information that you would like us to share with your fellow VSP Alumni.

We hope that you will find this Newsletter a valuable tool for engaging with your fellow VSP Alumni and the World Bank Group (WBG).

Kenneth K. Mwenda
VSP Program Manager



Back row: *Matingsatsinyana Mating* (Lesotho), *Winsome Miller* (Jamaica), *Cornell Campbell-Andres* (Guyana), *Argam Aramyan* (Armenia), *Faisa Hagi-Mohamed* (Somalia), *Buddhi Sisiranandana* (Sri Lanka), *Mohamed Redha Benmeradi* (Algeria), *Vipasouk Saysanavongphet* (Lao PDR), *Mamadou Diallo* (Guinea), *Bunnary Chhun* (Cambodia), *Tesfaye Alemu* (Ethiopia), *Kanan Musayev* (Azerbaijan), *Milen Troskov* (Bulgaria), *Churamani Aryal* (Nepal), *Jihane Obeid* (Lebanon), *Ekaterine Guntsadze* (Georgia).

Front row: *Martina Fernandes* (Angola), *Tendai Mukurazhizha* (Zimbabwe), *Fajrouz Sharour* (West Bank & Gaza), *Hani Enan* (Yemen), *Francisca Pascal* (Dominica), *Rowena Sta. Clara* (Philippines).

Not present: *Desire Musharitse* (Burundi), *Neha Singh* (India) and *Kay Zin Latt* (Myanmar).

15th Anniversary of the VSP

Message from the Vice President and Corporate Secretary



2019/20 marks the fifteenth anniversary of the VSP. We are very pleased to celebrate this very special moment with you.

From the inception of the VSP in 2004 to this day, the Program has provided a unique gateway to promote greater voice and participation of member countries in shaping the development agenda, and has become a very sought after, competitive platform, drawing interest of candidates from all over the world.

Over the past fifteen years, the high retention rate of the VSP Alumni in their respective government agencies has also contributed to the success of the Program. Serving as a critical partnership vehicle, the VSP has facilitated dialogue and relationships between the offices of the

Executive Directors and their capitals, and between the capitals and the Bank's operational teams.

Thanks to the many achievements of the Program and the strong support of our member states, our Board of Directors has approved Phase III of the Program for a period of five years, starting July 1, 2020.

As we embark on a new Phase, we will therefore count on your continuous feedback and active involvement in the VSP Alumni community to keep enriching this important Program.

Once again, congratulations to the VSP on this fifteenth anniversary, and please do stay in touch! With very best wishes,

Yvonne Tsikata
Vice President and Corporate Secretary

Message from the Director, Corporate Affairs and Administration, Corporate Secretariat

As we celebrate the fifteenth anniversary of the VSP, I would like to step back and take stock of some notable accomplishments of this Program.



Participants benefitted from a firsthand exposure to WBG operations, instruments and governance systems, enabling us to further enhance our collaboration and dialogue on the wide range of

WBG products, policies and procedures and "speak the same language". By gaining greater voice and representation, VSP Alumni became in turn very powerful ambassadors and champions of our twin goals to eradicate poverty and promote shared prosperity.

This year, our VSP Secondees also benefitted from a clinic on securities market development held at the US Securities and Exchange Commission. Going forward, we would love to deepen this enriched exposure of VSP Secondees to the work of other development partners of the WBG.

I would like to thank the Board of Executive Directors of the WBG, all host units and the VSP Secretariat staff for their unwavering support to the VSP. They have been amazing champions for this Program too!

Dominique Bichara
Director, Corporate Affairs and Administration
Corporate Secretariat

COMMEMORATIVE VIDEO

To celebrate this milestone, VSP Secretariat has produced a short and informative [video](#), capturing important perspectives from key stakeholders, including VSP Alumni, host units, members of the senior management team and some Board members.

Where Are They Now?

Meeting of VSP Alumni WB-IMF Annual Meetings Washington, DC October 16, 2019

The VSP hosted its Alumni to a meet-and-greet event on the margins of the 2019 World Bank Group-IMF Annual Meetings at our headquarters in Washington, DC.

Among the key issues discussed was the need to keep VSP Alumni updated about the Program and for the VSP Secretariat to work closely with VSP Alumni in promoting diversity and inclusion in the pool of future VSP candidates. Several VSP Alumni indicated that they would be happy to assist their government authorities in identifying highly qualified candidates for the VSP to further enhance the diversity of participants in the Program.

The VSP Program Manager, Kenneth K. Mwenda, stressed the importance of the VSP Alumni completing their mandatory two-year post-VSP service in the respective home government agencies. He also briefed Alumni on the adoption by the WBG's Board of Directors of Phase III of the Program for a period of five years, starting July 1, 2020.

In doing so, the Board also approved the expansion of the VSP cohort from 25 to 32 participants. Of these, 30 would come from eligible low and middle-income countries and 2 from countries that have programs of Reimbursable Advisory Services (RAS) with the WBG.

The Board also noted the highly satisfactory performance rating of the Program over the last five years by all stakeholders and the very impressive gender balance achieved over the last three VSP cohorts reaching 50 percent women participation.



Justine Judith Lekogo, a VSP alumnus (Cohort 13), was appointed in 2019 as the Deputy Minister of Finance of Gabon.



Mzia Giorgobiani, a VSP alumnus (Cohort 11), was appointed in 2018 as Deputy Minister of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia

The following VSP Alumni now serve as Senior Advisors and Advisors to various WBG Executive Directors:

Nyeso Stanley George (Nigeria)
Cohort 9 – Advisor, 2017 – 2020 and
Senior Advisor, 2020 – Present

Ronette Jordon (St. Vincent & the Grenadines)
Cohort 13 – Advisor, 2017 – Present

Jakhongir Normukhamedov (Ukraine)
Cohort 14 – Advisor, 2019 – Present

Gil Henriques (Angola)
Cohort 9 – Advisor, 2019 – Present

Gladys Ekwere (Nigeria)
Cohort 14 – Advisor, 2020 – Present

Going Forward

The WBG welcomed Cohort 16 on January 6, 2020.



Wali Qaderi
Afghanistan



Blerian Ania
Albania



Ines Bennedjou
Algeria



Teresa De Castro
Angola



Rokhana Khan
Bangladesh



*Tshepho
Babatshi-Gasha*
Botswana



Nambu Nicoline
Cameroon



Djekonde Naimbayel
Chad



Claudia Martinez
Colombia



Abdallah Bourhan
Djibouti



Anthony Mthunzi
Eswatini



*Ronette
Hesberger-Murray*
Guyana



Maher Abdelrahim
Jordan



Nida Krasniqi
Kosovo



Ulzijargal Gonchig
Mongolia



Adil Khan
Pakistan



Maryanne Maspok
Papua New Guinea



Donalyn Minimo
Philippines



Chol Agoot
South Sudan



Prageeth Gunasekara
Sri Lanka



*Thervina
Mathurin-Andrew*
St. Lucia



Roxanne John
St. Vincent &
the Grenadines



Sandra Namukaya
Uganda



Oksana Gryshkevych
Ukraine



Salem Bazara
Yemen

VSP Clinic on Capital Markets Development at US Securities and Exchange Commission

On January 22, 2020, the VSP participants attended a clinic on securities market development at the US Securities and Exchange Commission in Washington, DC. All VSP participants expressed great appreciation of the clinic and indicated that the engagement was an excellent learning opportunity for them regarding the development of capital markets.



Dealing with the Outbreak of the Coronavirus



Virginia Ann Johnson (in picture), Program Assistant in the Corporate Secretariat Vice-Presidency of the WBG, waving to the VSP Secondees to stress the importance of their safety and well-being during this period of the coronavirus outbreak.

On March 12, 2020, all Bank mission travels were suspended, in the wake of the global coronavirus outbreak. This precautionary measure extended to mission travel by VSP Secondees, as was the requirement for all Bank staff in Washington, DC, to adopt home-based work.

Here is some feedback from VSP Secondees on the quite unexpected turn of their Washington experience!

Adil Khan from Pakistan noted that “Coming over to Washington, DC with family was an adventure in itself. Working with the WBG was exhilarating as well as refreshing. And then...dealing with the COVID-19 scenario was a life changer. You see crisis brings danger and opportunities. I would like to think we are building physical, mental and spiritual strength to bring forth our unique gifts/skills to serve through our profession as well as in the communities we belong to.”

Nambu Nicoline from Cameroon thanked the VSP Secretariat for continuously checking on the Secondees during the coronavirus outbreak period, noting that “such efforts gave the Secondees hope that they are not alone during this COVID-19 pandemic”. *Anthony Mthunzi* from Eswatini added that “the unfortunate part with the 16th Cohort is that it coincided with the outbreak of COVID-19 which kind of slowed down the learning process through reduced activity as missions and meetings had to be suspended and all Bank staff work from home. The positive from this situation is the continued experience of VSPs in working under such trying times and their exposure to the coping strategies.”

Other VSP Secondees also expressed similar sentiments. *Ines Ben Nedjoue* from Algeria, for example, observed that: “despite this situation, the Secondees were able to discover how the WBG continues to respond to the needs of developing countries in emergency situations without compromising the quality of its intervention”.

Sandra Namukaya from Uganda added that “even though my physical experience with the Bank under the VSP has been compromised by the onset of the Coronavirus pandemic, it has been amazing to see how the Bank operates during a crisis with timely decision making in safeguarding its staff, and work has continued online between staff at HQs, and country offices”.

Ronette Hetsberger-Murray from Guyana shared that her greatest take-away from the Program so far has been to witness how the Bank is able to respond during a global crisis such as the coronavirus epidemic, its ability to mobilize funds quickly to assist governments, ensuring the safety and welfare of its staff globally and the ability for a seamless transition to home-based work to ensure business continuity: “I’ve had the opportunity to experience that sense of community – whether it was an email, text message or web meeting to check in on colleagues, give advice and offer support or participate in forums to discuss the effects of an impending global recession and the Bank’s response to recovery efforts.”

On March 17, 2020, the WBG and IFC’s Board of Directors met virtually and approved a package of up to US\$14 billion of fast-track financing to help countries and companies in their efforts to cope with the COVID-19 crisis.



Further Updates from the WBG

- Only July 30, 2019, IFC announced that it would continue to step up its operations in Africa, and that, in FY20, IFC would open offices in nine countries across the continent—in Angola, Benin, Chad, Mali, Niger, Somalia, Togo, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.
- The IDA19 replenishment negotiations were concluded successfully on December 13, 2019, in Sweden, with a record US\$82 billion package for FY21-23 in support of the world's poorest countries.
- On January 10, 2020, the WBG announced a new recruitment drive to scale up its presence in Fragility, Conflict and Violence (FCV) countries as part of the wider initiative to adjust the WBG's global footprint and strengthen its commitment to the FCV agenda.
- On March 3, 2020, the WBG and the IMF announced that they would adapt the 2020 WBG-IMF Spring Meetings to a virtual format. The goal of using this digital format is to serve Bank and Fund membership effectively while ensuring the health and safety of Spring Meetings participants and staff.
- On March 10, 2020, the WBG announced that, effective July 1, 2020, IFC and the World Bank would merge their respective Young Professionals Programs to create a single program – the WBG Young Professionals Program (The WBG YPP). This new program will also incorporate MIGA.

Please direct any questions, comments, and suggestions to Kenneth K. Mwenda (202-458-0295 or kmwenda@worldbankgroup.org)