

# 30 STORIES OF SERVICE

## JOINT JAPAN WORLD BANK Graduate Scholarship Program

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### **How has the JJWBGSP help you contribute to your country once you have completed your program?**

I studied Social Sciences as a major and then I didn't want to shift, but intended to go further into development or public policy. I wanted to get deeper in public policy and administration to try to make things better in my country. Mexico is a country that is more developed than others, but also has a way to go when compared to some other countries. There are still pending efforts to attain better results in government. Before attending the Program, I worked in several different areas in the Mexican public sector including energy and social development. I had also done some practices in academic areas.

### **Why do you think you were awarded a JJWBGSP scholarship?**

I think it would have been more difficult to assume the responsibilities I was able to before finishing the program at Columbia University. Maybe my superiors would not have offered me those responsibilities, nor would I have been able to completely embrace them. Being able to attend and finishing the Program, was indispensable in increasing my possibilities of taking charge of those responsibilities. I owe it to the scholarship for making it possible.



### **What was the most rewarding and challenging part of your study abroad experience?**

One of the aspects that I enjoyed the most were the case studies from around the World, as part of the MPA. We were going through crises in different cities and countries such as what happened with the World Trade Center on 9/11. We went over Giuliani's Policy in the City and worked with an Argentine example of how trash was handled. I felt it valuable from all the case studies, clearly there was participation from very knowledgeable people from all over the world. Working on teams was one of the most amazing aspects of the program. Also, being at Columbia University in the City of New York they had close relations with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) so we were able to work with real governments, making some research assistant projects with real people and real data to learn hands-on statistics. I was able to take part in a project about rural electrification in Brazil and we were using real numbers from energy services in one of the regions in the South American country. All of these experiences -being able to work with real information in real countries, in some cases with real projects, was amazing. I found it mind blowing!

“.....  
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## **What role did your family, friends, and/or employer play in your study abroad experience? How has this helped or hindered your journey?**

They were central. My main mentor and employer had a PhD from MIT and he insisted that I should get a degree from abroad. He was a major factor from the working place view. Also, my father has always been an academic and he had spent two years in Boston during the seventies, so I had that reference - very strong in my history. Another very determining aspect was my sister Mariana, who had studied a PhD in NYC in the nineties. She lives there and she was crucial finding a place for me and my kids to live. It was her that helped me get an apartment, signed the contract for me since I was a foreigner. I travelled with my two kids, who were six and three years old at the time, so it was not easy to take the housing that the school was providing. My sister was a huge factor in helping me getting a place and looking after my kids while I was at school. At some point, I thought I would go back without my degree. With the help of all these beloved people I was able to make it. My mother and family also helped me financially, because I had to send my daughter to nursery school. The scholarship helped me with some of those expenditures. I needed all the help I could get.

## **Why do you think you were awarded a JJWBGSP scholarship?**

I am not sure, probably it was a mixture of factors. I guess I was rewarded with a scholarship for development, or maybe because I was aiming at a mid-career program. I was 34 years old, I wasn't 21. The MPA is geared towards very young people. I was going into a program with years of working experience and so, I was able to refer several professional experiences in the Government in Mexico. Probably that was interesting for the World Bank, having a chance to continue working in the government and going deeper into my country's challenges and trying to look for better results. I think being 34 and having 10 to 12 years in the workplace made a stronger statement than if I was younger. Also they asked for recommendation letters, so probably my superiors or teachers were able to describe specific strengths in my profile when they accepted

recommending me. During the two years before applying, I had been working on my thesis for my major degree. In Mexico a lot of major programs still ask for a thesis. So I had been working during a relatively long period with very strong academic people in my university. Probably, they were able to provide an eloquent recommendation for me, so that may have also helped.

## **What did you learn about yourself during your experience?**

I was able to be something I never thought I could be. And also that having a difficult time for two years -I honestly had a very difficult time going ahead with school and kids and everything-, it is worth it. It's worth going through a very intense and difficult project because in the end, you get the biggest reward. You can't imagine how it feels to get to the end.

## **As an alumnae, what advice would you offer to other women who are considering applying for the JJWBGSP?**

I would tell other women that I don't know why - probably as men and women we never think, or sometimes or at least in my country, culturally, we don't think things are for us. We don't think good things are for us. Too expensive, too long, too far away, our English is not so good, we won't understand. We find so many obstacles and mainly we don't think it is for us. We think it's too good and it's for someone else. For instance, I thought it was for poorer countries or Middle East countries -where challenges are probably bigger. I thought that because I was white, it wouldn't help. I thought I wouldn't be rewarded a scholarship. I was also thinking -I'm 34 and people go into the MPA much younger. I had thoughts like that. And actually, when I tried to talk friends into the program, they say that especially when they have families or kids, they find it cumbersome to think about moving away. In my case, I had my sister. Other people may find other sources of help. One of my recommendations would be -don't think it's for someone else, probably it is for you. Your life changes so radically, that you should give it a thought. It's worth it.

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