

As the seventeenth (17th) cohort of the World Bank Voice Secondment Program (VSP) was preparing to graduate this past summer (2022), we sat down with a number of the Voice Secondees to hear from them on their experiences and what they had to share with the World Bank as well as with other stakeholders, such as future Voice Secondees and past alumni of the Program, on the value creation and value capture of the Program. This is what they had to say:

VSP question 1: What were the biggest surprises when you arrived in Washington DC for the residential part of the Program?



Luis Alves: “The Bipolar weather of Washington. DC..., in one week, it can be warm, hot, cold and raining. Most of the cultural events, for example those held at museums, are free with a lot to offer. Life in DC is so expensive in comparison to other US cities and country capitals.”

Luis also gave credit to the World Bank for providing the Voice Secondees with decent and reasonable hotel accommodation in downtown Washington DC, located within a walking distance to the headquarters of the World Bank and to many other key institutions such as the IMF and IFC. In addition, Luis was appreciative of the close proximity of various social amenities.



Melissa Badio: “I was really surprised by all the possibility you have in Washington DC and the many sites someone can visit. At the Bank, I was also surprised by the diversity of the staff and the values shared. The employees of the Bank are open and create occasions to better know each other.”



Chevonne Britton: “I think I was most surprised at how vast the World Bank was, and by extension the World Bank Group. I never fully understood the structure of the Bank and how all the pieces worked together to further the twin goals. I was taken aback by the size of the institution and the number of staff it employs, both at HQ and in country offices. I was also impressed by the diversity of the staff at the Bank and even the people in the Washington D.C. area, which meant that I never felt out of place. It was easy to feel comfortable living and working in Washington D.C. for the months we were there. Lastly, I was surprised at how friendly and welcoming everyone was. From the staff in my host Unit to the Vice President of EFI, everyone was open to having a chat and helping where they could to make my time at the Bank better and to achieve my goals. I really appreciated this, especially since we were working in a hybrid environment with limited face-to-face interaction.”



Hamsa Al-Saedi: Stressing the value that the World Bank Voice Secondment Program brings to the World Bank and its client countries, Hamsa pointed out that: “The VSP is a necessary program for all countries. Do your best and enjoy your time. Spring often brings with it some environment allergies resulting from some high levels of pollen while the Summers can be humid.”



Shahanaz Maqbool: Shahanaz was marveled out how World Bank staff were fully engaged in the delivery of their work despite the pandemic being at its height and forcing many people to work partly remotely.



Tevfik Turkeri: “It was my first time in the US, and I was really excited to see the capital of the US. On my way from Dulles International Airport to my hotel in downtown DC, the first thing that got my attention and that surprised me most was the wonderful union of nature and city life in the DMV. I was really intrigued to see how nature is so well preserved in the DMV and how people value this how nature plays a key part of human life.”

VSP question 2: What are the biggest takeaways from your experience as a Voice Secondee at the World Bank?

Luis Alvel: “The VSP Program uniquely provided me with an opportunity to work in an integrated, respectful, diverse, multicultural international working environment. It gave me a better view of how well organized the WBG is, helping me to understand the institutional mechanism, procedures and tools of the WBG for promoting accountability and transparency.”

Shahanaz Maqbool: Shahanza spoke of the high level of professionalism and meticulousness that goes into the preparation of every World Bank project or program.



Artur Hambardzunyan: “I gained profound knowledge and information about World Bank operations, interventions, financing instruments, preparation, and delivery of Technical Assistance and Advisory Service missions, as well as internal processes, diversity and opportunity to work and learn more about different cultures and people. The VSP program also helped to build a very good network with the World Bank staff and with the representatives of the other client countries that will help with future mutual beneficial cooperation.”



Millicent Silla: Millicent noted that her participation in Board meetings gave her an insight into how developmental matters for IDA countries are discussed. She also credits the experience of spending some time in the offices of the World Bank Executive Director as a valuable resource of augmenting her World Bank operational learning.



Barnabas Vote: Of his experience working in the Integrity Vice-Presidency of the World Bank (INT), Barnabas posited that: “I have learned the...skills and knowledge on investigations of fraud and corruption especially involving World Bank Group (WBG) projects. I have also learned about the operations of the World Bank Executive Director’s office including the roles and functions of that office in representing our region, and how they raise issues of country needs to the World Bank Board for approval and assistance.”

VSP question 3: What would you like to share with future VSP Secondees about the Program?

Chevanne Britton: “The VSP is a worthwhile experience. The work is meaningful, in that you, even as a voice secondee, are contributing to the Bank’s goals of ending poverty and promoting shared prosperity through your work in the unit and region you are assigned.”

Artur Hambarzumyan: “I would like to stress that the VSP program is a very useful and important program which really improves the dialogue and relationship between the client countries and the offices of the World Bank Executive Directors, in addition to enabling the operational teams of the World Bank Group to engage with the client more meaningfully and in a collaborative and effective way.”

Shahanaz Maqbool: “Become a sponge for knowledge...absorb as much as you can from meetings, chats, interactions, reports, publications and online resources you have access to.”

Millicent Silla: “You will have the opportunity of working with experts. Use your time to read, network with staffs within the World Bank Group because you will need them later especially if you are thinking of coming to work for the WBG after two (2) years.”

Tevfik Turkeri: “I would recommend to future VSP secondees to be active and interactive during the program. The World Bank is like a school and there is no end of learning new things and meeting new people who have great experience in the area of expertise. At the same time, I would recommend the VSP secondees to explore and find out the beauties of Washington DC.”

Barnabas Vote: “I would recommend that if anyone gets the opportunity to be part VSP program, make use of every single moment you have when you are in the Bank, that is, whether or not you are in your host unit, the World Bank Executive Directors’ offices, learning/workshops, mission trips or social activities offered by the Bank or VSP Secretariat.”

VSP question 4: What would you like to share with prospective WBG host units regarding the value of hosting a Voice Secondee?

Melissa Badio: “As the VSP Secondees learn from their respective World Bank host units, they can also share and bring valuable knowledge to these teams, that is, in terms of what can help the World Bank better understand how officials of the

client countries view the institution, how the client countries utilize the resources from the World Bank and the usefulness of the international development role of the World Bank to those countries.”

Tevfik Turkeri: “The World Bank Voice Secondment Program is a mutual learning experience. There is significant scope for the World Bank host units to learn from the experiences of the VSP secondees, like how the implementing agency on a World Bank financed project is functioning, how the government views the World Bank from outside, and how to strengthen the ties between the World Bank and a client country. The knowledge and experience gained on the Program is important not only for the VSP Secondee but also for the government and the World Bank as that can help to strengthen the bilateral relationship between the two entities. I would encourage World Bank host units to provide VSP secondees with varied and wide operational opportunities, as the VSP secondees have a lot to offer to the World Bank.”

Shahanaz Maqbool: “A voice secondee brings a lot of country experience and he/she should be able to take a lot of World Bank operational knowledge back to his or her home country for a seamless improvement of the client-World Bank relationship in future.”