

30 STORIES OF SERVICE

JOINT JAPAN WORLD BANK Graduate Scholarship Program

MEET SAI BO BO HTET AUNG, MYANMAR
UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS (2011),
UNITED KINGDOM

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

In 2008, I joined an INGO known as Save the Children and served there as an ART Medical Doctor (HIV Physician) to provide care and HIV treatment to people living with HIV (PLHIV). When I considered continuing my studies, I chose public health because I believe that I could contribute better in this field – one of the most needy areas in Myanmar. At that time, Myanmar ranked as the last 10 countries in the human development Index. We were facing many problems that not only included communicable diseases and poverty but also low economic and the poor health status of our people. I hoped that I would contribute in health systems reforms as an advocate for health to save thousands of lives. As a result, I applied for a place at the University of Leeds and received a scholarship from JJWBGSP.

How has the JJWBGSP helped you to contribute to your country once you have completed your program?

Currently, I am serving as Public Health Programme Officer at United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) Myanmar. Since 2011, UNOPS has been operating as a Principal Recipient of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria in Myanmar and I am responsible for leading, managing and monitoring several multi-million dollar projects which are designed to tackle the burdens of these 3 communicable diseases. We work in collaboration many implementing partners and a government-led national disease control program.



What was the best part about your university?

There were so many good experiences I obtained from Leeds. I had the opportunity to study in a world class learning environment that consisted of professors, course tutors, and mentors. I also gained good insights from discussions with my classmates during formal lectures as well as from informal talks. The teaching methods and facilities at the Nuffield Centre for International Health and Development are state of the art and my alma mater is one of a few education centers in the UK that collaborated with the World Health Organization.

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

The most challenging time I experienced in Leeds University happened when I prepared my dissertation. The preparation was a long process and a really hard time. My mentor was very supportive. I had to read a lot of books and articles. For 2-3 months, I was overwhelmed with drafting, reviewing, proper referencing and re-writing chapters of my dissertation. When I finished writing it, I felt very relaxed. I felt a real sense of relief from this type of stress. But most importantly, I gained an important lesson on how to effectively manage time and stress.

Why do you think you were awarded a JJWBGSP scholarship?

I believe I was awarded a JJWBGSP scholarship due to my previous achievements and undergraduate degree. My experience as a medical director was suitable to pursue a master's degree in Public Health. In addition, my devotion and enthusiasm to contribute in uplifting the health status of the citizens of Myanmar along with my potential to become a leader of public health in Myanmar made me a good candidate.

What did you learn about yourself during your experience?

I found myself becoming more mature and more experienced. The first month in England was fantastic and the time there seemed quick. That was the first time I had been in England and Europe in my life. I gained a lot of experiences in the European educational system, transportation in Europe's cities, and the British culture.

What role did your family, friends, and/or employer played in your study abroad experience? How has this helped or hindered your journey?

My wife and family were very supportive although they didn't come along with me to England. They provided needy support, by sending through express mail, Myanmar traditional food, warm clothes, some documents and books.

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

Yes, of course, I do always provide support and advice to anyone who wishes to apply for JJWBGSP. After coming back from my studies in England, two colleagues from 'Save the Children in Myanmar' consulted me about applying for JJWBGSP as well as to the University that I attended. I shared with them some tips and my experience of writing essays and other related documents of the application process. They both were accepted by the University.

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