

THE WORLD BANK GROUP VOICE SECONDMENT PROGRAM (VSP)

Second Edition of VSP Newsletter (Winter, 2020/21)



Welcome to the second 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). All of us at the VSP Secretariat wish you and your families a safe and happy holiday season and a prosperous 2021.

Kenneth K. Mwenda
VSP Program Manager

Welcoming the new Vice President and World Bank Group Corporate Secretary, Ms. Diariétou Gaye



The VSP would like to welcome Ms. Diariétou Gaye to her new role as Vice President and WBG Corporate Secretary. Ms. Gaye joined the Corporate Secretariat on September 1, 2020, succeeding Ms. Yvonne Tsikata who retired from the WBG in August. The VSP Secretariat is housed in the Corporate Secretariat and we look forward to continuing the work of the VSP under her stewardship.

Prior to her appointment, Ms. Gaye served as the World Bank Director of Strategy and Operations for the Eastern and Southern Africa Region. During this time, she was a member of the VSP Steering Group. She has also served previously as World Bank Country Director in East Africa as well as the World Bank Country Director for Sri Lanka. See link here for her [full bio](#).

New Appointments of VSP Alumni



In July 2020, **Mr. Zachée Iyakaremye**, a VSP alumnus (Cohort 12), was appointed as Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Health for the Republic of Rwanda. Prior to his appointment, Mr. Iyakaremye was the Fiscal Decentralization Division Manager at Rwanda's Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning. He also served previously in other leading roles, including as Director of Budget Policy Formulation and Reforms at the same Ministry. In its [online edition of July 18, 2020](#), the New Times, a leading Rwandan media

publication, reported that: "The 35-year-old boasts more than ten years of experience in the field of Public Finance Management from Resource Mobilization, Planning, Budgeting, Project Management and Accounting, to Reporting and Audit. The father of two also brings on the table experience in donor funded operations and projects thanks to extensive training and placements in international organizations including the World Bank".



In August 2020, **Ms. Neha Singh**, another VSP alumnus (Cohort 14), was promoted to the position of Deputy Director in the Office of the Chief Economic Advisor at the Department of Economic Affairs within the Ministry of Finance for the Republic of India.

Voices from the VSP 2020 Graduating Class



Anthony Mthunzi,
Eswatini

"I was deployed to the Long-term Finance Unit (EFNLT) in IFC where I joined the Housing Finance Team and spent most of my cohort time there. My job requirements at IFC entailed assisting the Housing Finance Team prepare for projects missions; as well as research and analyze information for preparation of the 'Housing Affordability and Global Benchmarking Report'. The specific work activities included research of the housing landscape in South Africa and Namibia, review of project documents (Rwanda and Kenya Housing Finance Projects) and participating in the development of a guidance note on *Covid-19 Global Housing Finance Implications and Responses*.

I also got extensive exposure to Bank information such as its products, procedures and operations which I believe has better positioned me to adequately advise my government in Bank related matters. The outbreak of Covid-19 just a few weeks after entry into the program presented a new experience and lessons to learn. Continuous awareness raising and information sharing eased the fear of contracting a life-threatening disease while in a foreign country. Also, the combination of a dedicated staff and well-functioning systems presented an excellent coping mechanism for the Bank enabling it to continue with its business while its staff worked from home. As a result, the VSP program was successfully concluded and objectives met despite the emergence of the new 'normal'."



Ronette
Hetsberger-Murray,
Guyana

"Some highlights of my VSP assignment included time spent in the Executive Director's Office which afforded me the opportunity to understand the functions of the office, its role and relationship with the Board, the members of its constituency, the country management unit and other key stakeholders. Attendance at Pre-Board and Board meetings meant witnessing the decision-making process and interactions between and among constituencies. Notably the experience in the unit provided hands-on experience in offering implementation support to clients.

The greatest take-away was being able to witness how the Bank has responded during the time of global crisis. Each community of practice, each unit, each department rallied around a common cause, demonstrating the Bank's ability to mobilize funds quickly, ensuring the safety and welfare of its' staff globally and providing a seamless transition to home-based work to ensure business continuity. Finally, the program brought together a diverse and gender-balanced team of participants."



Nida Krasniqi,
Kosovo

"As part of the ECA Development Effectiveness Unit I have had the opportunity to work with teams to develop the most effective Covid-19 Response operations, trying to balance out between the urgency and quality of the matter. In addition to the emergency operations, I have understood how important it is for the World Bank to keep working towards the ongoing projects. Thus, reviewing the region's DPLs for Board approval has been another one of my duties in the host unit. Being exposed to so much information, professionals from different units in the World Bank, and interacting with VSP colleagues has been very enriching, to say the least. I am convinced that I will be able to use this knowledge and experience in the benefit of my country by working better with the World Bank."



Ines Bennedjou,
Algeria

“The Voice Secondment Program is an initiative with multidimensional benefits. Regarding my experience as a VSP Secondee, I can highlight the following takeaways:

- This program is an effective way to familiarize yourself with the rules and procedures of the World Bank. This practical approach is relevant for capacity building and for better cooperation between countries and the World Bank.
- The VSP is a good opportunity to discover more closely the areas of interest which the World Bank is focusing on to support its client countries in their development process.
- This program was an excellent opportunity to develop a professional network within the World Bank.
Beyond the tasks entrusted either within the host unit or during my time in the ED office, the VSP gave me the opportunity to attend different clinics, online courses, conferences... this allowed me to better understand the functioning of the World Bank.
- During this unprecedented health crisis that hit the entire world, I was able to see how the Bank intervenes in emergency situations to support client countries.
- The home-based work was another experience for me which I consider successful. This is because the Bank has the most appropriate technical means to succeed with remote working...”



Nambu Nicoline,
Cameroon

“During the Assignment, I had the opportunity to participate in Boardroom meetings and visit the U.S Security Exchange Commission where I was drilled on the task of regulating the stock exchange and avert other financial fraud, to name just a few. Events such as the Conversations with the World Bank President and the IMF Managing Director on topical issues also got my attention.

Notwithstanding the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic..., I wish to reiterate that, the work experience I acquired at the World Bank was immense. I worked on Advisory and Analytics Services as regards good governance practices. The exposure at the Bank permitted me to network with specialists in various domains who could subsequently help my country with advice on issues related to their domains of specialty. Also, the rich knowledge hub at the World Bank could not go unnoticed. I was privileged to take face-to-face and online courses on World Bank products, processes and other topical subjects. It was amazing to see how the World Bank is flexible in restructuring projects in view of addressing the current coronavirus pandemic.”



Roksana Khan,
Bangladesh

“I was fortunate enough to be part of the greatest institution, the World Bank Group, for six months through the VSP. It was an excellent opportunity to have a deeper insight into the work of the World Bank. I benefitted greatly from my experience as a VSP Secondee through the culture, ethics, mission and vision of the institution as well as through trainings and practical experience pertaining to World Bank operational and decision-making procedures. I also benefitted tremendously from some effective professional networking and institutional values. Also, my work assignments were enriched by how well the World Bank connects globally, regionally and at the country-level to the client to achieve equitable global development by aligning the twin goals of

poverty reduction and shared prosperity. The VSP is a well-structured program, with experienced and dedicated staff. And the learning on the VSP has been mutual, that is, the VSP Secondees get to learn from World Bank staff and the latter also learn from the VSP Secondees on country specifics that the former bring to the table.”



Roxanne John,
St. Vincent and the
Grenadines

“It was a tremendous experience for learning and sharing during the six months I spent at the World Bank as a Voice Secondee. This was even more remarkable in the time of COVID-19, when close to 50 percent of the work time was shifted to home-based; this move affected my ability to participate in face to face missions to client countries. Nevertheless, I adapted quickly to the ‘new norm’ and made the best use of virtual meetings, webinars and online learning.

It was a privilege to work in the ECA Region East unit that serves several countries, including Tajikistan, Belarus, Uzbekistan and Ukraine. In the Unit, I worked on: countries readiness to maximize finance for development which is aimed at crowding in private sector investment; public expenditure review; Public Investment Management; Public-Private Partnership policy framework; and State-Owned Enterprises policy note. It was an incredible experience to be part of decision review meetings where candid responses were made by peer reviewers that aimed to strengthen the quality of reports. The two weeks spent working in the Executive Director’s office was quite insightful and enlightening.”



Sandra Namukaya,
Uganda

“Joining the VSP in January 2020, I would never have anticipated any disruption. However, two and a half months into the program, the world was faced with a pandemic that brought everything to a standstill. With the lockdowns came the home-based work arrangement that got us forging our way into the new normal. During this time, I came to appreciate the efforts by everyone to ensure that clients’ needs are met with minimum disruption. This called for constant virtual engagements and adjustments to interventions to address the emerging concern. I am pleased with the contribution I made to operations in my host unit...and the knowledge I acquired during the program. I learned a lot about environment and social safeguards policies in World Bank operations to help me enrich my contribution to development when I get back home in Uganda.”



Teresa De Csastro,
Angola

“The Voice Secondment Program is a unique and privileged opportunity that I will remember forever. Spending 6 months away from home, family and friends was a great experience and a learning experience, especially with a new lifestyle due to the current situation of the COVID 19 Pandemic, which will never be forgotten. The most memorable moments were meeting people of all nationalities, cultures and backgrounds. I met very professional, receptive, communicative and kind people.

I felt equally special when receiving emails from the World Bank President, David Malpass, Vice President for Africa, Hafez Ghanem, Regional Director, Elisabeth Huybens, the EDS 25 office, Practice Manager, Manuel Vargas, the VSP team and, most importantly, having had the opportunity to participate in important meetings with my constituency as well as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund seminars,

forums and concept note documents related to countries in the Africa, Asia and Latin America Regions. Thank you for the great opportunity.”



Thervina
Mathurin-Andrew,
St. Lucia

“As a VSP Seconded, I had the privilege of working with experts and developed a professional network at the Financial Infrastructure, Inclusion and Access Unit. I also established deeper relationship with the Office of the Executive Director (ED 07) for furtherance of client country-World Bank (WB) connections. In addition, this enriching experience allowed me to diversify knowledge and skillset which can support digital reform efforts in Saint Lucia and the Caribbean Region.

A major highlight of the VSP assignment is seeing the strategic approach adopted by the World Bank in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure employee safety and productivity while meeting client country ‘extraordinary’ needs. I also got a profound appreciation for digitization and an understanding of governments’ approach in dealing with the evolving fintech ecosystem through my involvement in research topics surrounding fintech, credit reporting and supotech.”



Chol M. Agoot,
South Sudan

“I was able to participate in projects supervisory Mission trips to Kenya and Rwanda as part of the Public Financial Management Reform project. During my stay in Washington, D.C, I attend bank offered e-learning trainings, seminars, Board meeting (ED office), units briefing/meetings. I was also exposed and participated in PFM and COVID 19 Response projects document and process at the bank. E.g. Uganda, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, and South Sudan.

I have learned so much from the Bank staff experience, advice and guidance over the past 6 months and my time spent with the Governance Fraternity has been such a valuable part of my career journey. I know I will carry the things I have learned here with me and I will always look back on this experience with a lot of fondness. Special thanks go to my wonderful managers Kenneth Mwenda, Nicola Smithers and Task Team Leader and administrative secretaries for the VSP program at the WBG for the tremendous job they did in making space to accommodates me and taking my exposure to greater heights.”

Virtual 2020 WBG-IMF Annual Meetings

The 2020 WBG-International Monetary Fund (IMF) Annual Meetings took place from October 12, 2020, to October 18, 2020, focusing on the following key theme: “Supporting a Resilient Recovery”. Among the notable issues discussed were the following:

- (a) what can be done to encourage greater private sector participation in debt-service suspension;
- (b) how countries can recover from COVID-19 while continuing to address the growing challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss;
- (c) how the delivery of essential services, such as health and education and social protection, can be re-imagined in response to COVID-19 in a way that protects against future shocks and builds a more resilient recovery;
- (d) ways to accelerate digital access and create ubiquitous, affordable, and reliable connectivity for all; and
- (e) obstacles to poverty reduction, including conflict and climate change.

(Source: WBG-IMF Annual Meetings [website](#) (article dated October 12-18, 2020))

Updates from the WBG-IMF Development Committee Meeting of October 16, 2020



(Source: WBG-IMF Development Committee [website](#) (dated October 16, 2020))

The joint WBG-IMF Development Committee meets every fall at the time of the Annual Meetings of the Boards of the Governors of the WBG and the IMF, and every spring at the Spring Meetings, to discuss the progress of the work of the WBG and the IMF. The 2020 WBG-IMF Annual Meetings were held virtually due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The WBG-IMF Development Committee met virtually on October 16, 2020, and, through a [communiqué](#), called upon the WBG and the IMF to continue working with member countries, the public and private sectors, local and bilateral development partners, and international organizations, including the UN, in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the WBG-IMF Development Committee encouraged the WBG to, among other things, keep a firm focus on the twin goals of ending extreme poverty and fostering shared prosperity in a sustainable manner, as well as on the IDA19 and capital commitments, while supporting progress towards the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Development Committee noted further that the pandemic has resulted in the largest global economic contraction of the last eight decades, adding that it is impacting developing, emerging and developed economies as well as increasing the global poverty rate, exacerbating inequalities and damaging long-term economic growth prospects. The Development Committee encouraged the WBG and IMF to continue to review the debt challenges of low-income countries and propose actions to address their fiscal and debt stress on a case-by-case basis as well as review the

debt challenges of middle-income countries and explore customized solutions to their fiscal and debt stress on a case-by-case basis, including by providing additional resources in these challenging times, in line with the capital package commitments.

(Source: WBG-IMF Development Committee [communiqué](#) (dated October 16, 2020))

An update from the World Bank on COVID-19 Vaccines

The WBG has made major commitments to supporting our clients with their procurement and distribution of vaccines as and when they become available. This includes up to \$12billion of funding from the World Bank for this purpose and \$4billion from the IFC to support vaccine manufacturers and supplies in low and middle income countries. It is vital that our client countries and people have equitable access to vaccines to help them recover from this devastating crisis.

World Bank Group-IMF Annual Meetings in Morocco Postponed until 2022

On November 5, 2020, the Kingdom of Morocco, the WBG and the IMF announced that the planned WBG-IMF Annual Meetings scheduled to take place in [Marrakesh](#), Morocco, in October 2021 will be postponed by 12 months until 2022 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2021 WBG-IMF Annual Meetings will take place in Washington, D.C.

The Annual Meetings are usually held for two consecutive years at the WBG and IMF headquarters in Washington, D.C. and every third year in another member country. The Annual Meetings bring together central bankers, ministers of finance and development, private sector executives, civil society, media and academics to discuss issues of global concern, including the world economic outlook, global financial stability, poverty eradication, inclusive economic growth and job creation, climate change, and others.

(Source: World Bank Group [press release](#), dated November 5, 2020)

World Bank launches ‘Accelerator Program’ to improve global foundational learning

During a WBG-IMF Annual Meetings roundtable event this year (2020), the World Bank, in partnership with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, U.K.’s Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), UNICEF, and USAID, launched the new ‘Accelerator Program’. Developed to demonstrate that strong political and financial commitment, sound policy design, and a relentless

focus on learning outcomes can speed up countries’ progress in improving foundational learning, the Accelerator Program coordinates efforts across the partners to ensure that the countries in the Program are showing improvements in foundational skills at scale over the next three to five years.

The Accelerator Program acknowledges a global cohort of countries or sub-national entities that: 1)

demonstrate strong political and financial commitment to improved learning, 2) are willing to measure and monitor learning outcomes, and 3) have an investment plan to reduce Learning Poverty. Under the Program, each country will identify specific targets aimed at boosting children's foundational skills and assess the interventions and capacity needed to achieve these targets. The goal

is for countries to demonstrate significant progress towards their targets as part of a broader, longer-term effort to inspire more countries to tackle learning poverty.

(Source: World Bank Group [feature article](#), dated November 20, 2020)

3 Things You Need to Know about Adaptation and Resilience

The WBG is helping countries adapt and increase their capacity to weather climate shocks, with projects supporting early warning systems, disaster response, civic awareness, strengthening buildings, and post-disaster recovery. That effort is even more critical as countries face the health and economic impacts of the coronavirus pandemic. *In a nutshell, here are the three key things to know about the WBG's efforts on adaptation and resilience.*

(1) Adaptation and resilience are inextricably linked to development outcomes

Good adaptation can deliver good development outcomes, such as safer, better-off communities or hardier crops. At the same time, securing good development requires effective adaptation measures. Investing in adaptation and resilience is not about investing in roads or bridges or powerplants alone. It is about investing in people, businesses, and communities facing the impacts of a changing climate. It is about smarter development that can deliver health, education and livelihoods.

(2) The WBG is ramping up support for countries' efforts to adapt and build resilience to a changing climate

The WBG launched a first-of-its-kind [Action Plan on Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience](#). The Action Plan commits to doubling adaptation financing, ensuring that the WBG's adaptation financing will equal its financing for mitigation – reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. In addition to boosting direct finance, the plan will also support countries' efforts to systematically manage climate risks at every phase of policy planning, investment design, and implementation.

Through the Action Plan, the WBG will help client countries on several fronts, for instance, on:

- Disaster risk management, through higher quality forecasts, early warning systems, and climate information services to better prepare 250 million people in at least 30 countries for climate risks.
- Water security, through climate-informed management plans for 100 river basins, and improved flood and drought risk management infrastructure for at least 15 million people.
- Coastal resilience, by helping at least 20 countries become more resilient to climate-related shocks and stressors.
- Human development, by helping at least 20 countries adopt more climate-responsive social protection systems.
- Financial protection, by improving the ability of at least 20 countries to respond early to, and recover faster from, climate and disaster shocks.
- Forests, by avoiding deforestation, promoting reforestation or sustainable forest management for 120 million hectares of forest in 50 countries.

(3) The WBG is leading on innovative approaches that will boost adaptation and resilience outcomes in countries

The WBG is actively exploring how to go beyond measuring whether a single investment is resilient, to also evaluating whether our investments build wider, more systemic resilience. The WBG is developing a new rating system to create incentives for, and improve the tracking of, global progress on adaptation and resilience. The new system will be rolled out to projects in relevant sectors in our Fiscal Year 2021 (July 2020- June 2021). The rating system will help countries identify which activities most effectively build resilience to climate change and should be prioritized.

(Source: World Bank [brief](#), dated June 1, 2020)

New Board of Executive Directors of the World Bank, as of November 1, 2020

The Articles of Agreement of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) state in Article V, Section 4 that Executive Directors are appointed or elected every two years. The year 2020 marked an election year and the election process was concluded on October 15, 2020. The composition of the new Board of Executive Directors of the Bank became effective on [November 1, 2020](#).

The Board of Executive Directors of IBRD is composed of [25 Executive Directors](#). The President of the WBG serves as the presiding officer of the Board of Executive Directors, although he has no vote except a deciding vote in case of an equal division. Also, the Executive Directors as individuals cannot exercise any power nor commit or represent the WBG unless specifically authorized by the Board to do so.

Under the Articles of Agreement of the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and the International Development Association (IDA), the Executive Directors of IBRD serve *ex officio* as members of the Board of Directors of IFC and the Board of Executive Directors of IDA. The Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) has a separate Board.

In general, Executive Directors operate in continuous session and meet in accordance with WBG requirements and needs. The Executive Directors consider and decide on the following:

- IBRD loans;
- IDA credits and grants;
- IFC investments;
- MIGA guarantees; and
- Policies and strategic issues that impact the World Bank Group's general operations.

In addition, the Executive Directors are also responsible for presenting to the Boards of Governors an audit of accounts, an administrative budget, and an annual report on the WBG's operations and policies as well as other matters at the World Bank-IMF Annual Meetings. Also, all Executive Directors are members of the Boards' Steering Committee that produces the Boards' Work Program.

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