

# KOICA-KU GSIS SP Alumni News



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**Korea University**  
Graduate School of  
International Studies

KOICA-KU GSIS SP Official YouTube Channel  
[www.youtube.com/channel/UCFQzBTyRITB1zaToqLf69tw](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCFQzBTyRITB1zaToqLf69tw)

KOICA-KU GSIS SP Alumni Facebook Page  
[www.facebook.com/groups/KUGSISKOICA/?ref=share](http://www.facebook.com/groups/KUGSISKOICA/?ref=share)

# Letter from the Dean

Welcome to the Alumni Newsletter! I truly hope everyone stays safe and healthy during this coronavirus pandemic.

KOICA-KU GSIS Scholarship Program (SP) has been providing quality education and training for future specialists in the field of finance and tax policy since 2017. With our attempts and achievements in providing an extensive curriculum and extracurricular programs, I am delighted to announce that KU GSIS had a successful bid on the program last year and thus KOICA-KU GSIS SP will continue for the next three years. KU GSIS will be investing its efforts into the development of our program by diversifying lectures and planning various new events including field trips.

COVID-19 pandemic is affecting everyone's daily life and constitutes unprecedented challenges. Even in such difficult times, the faculty, staff, and partners of KU GSIS, such as Korean Institute of Public Finance (KIPF), are committed to meeting those challenges and successfully implementing our program. Courses have been smoothly converted to online seminars to provide virtual meetings with SP students and to share their thoughts with each other. Furthermore, various special lectures will be provided online to cultivate practical research skills and knowledge for the invited government officials.

To facilitate networking among the alumni, KU GSIS has requested overseas alumni associations to invite SP alumni to their meetings and activate communication channels such as Facebook and YouTube. KU GSIS will also make continued efforts to improve this program and foster outstanding individuals to pursue their contributions to the socio-economic development of our partner countries. To achieve the ultimate goals of this program, I also ask you for sincere support. I would appreciate it if you could share your stories and show interests through the KOICA-KU GSIS SP alumni channels.

Korea University as a globally renowned institution for its excellence in research and education is ranked 69th worldwide and the 1st among private universities in Korea according to the QS World University Ranking in 2020. To maintain this reputation, KU GSIS will keep on conducting innovative research and training future leaders to be capable of contributing to sustainable development of the global community.

With best wishes,

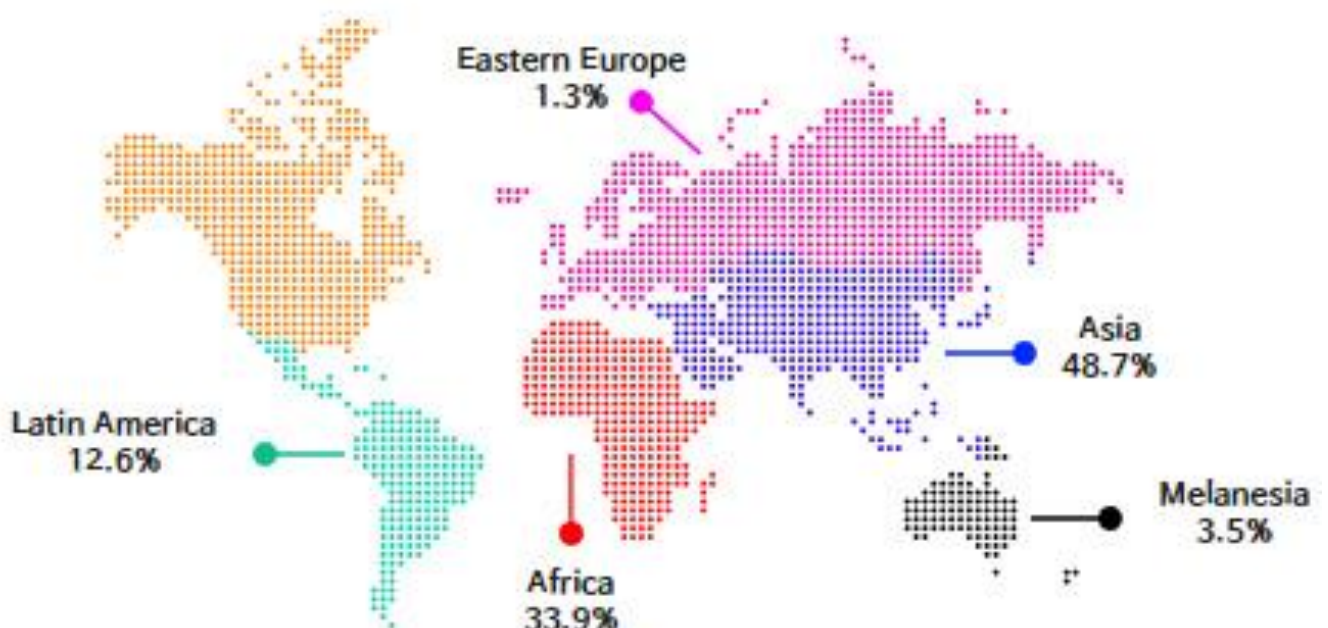


**Kim, Sung-han, Ph.D.**  
Dean, Graduate School of International Studies, Korea University

# Current State of Alumni

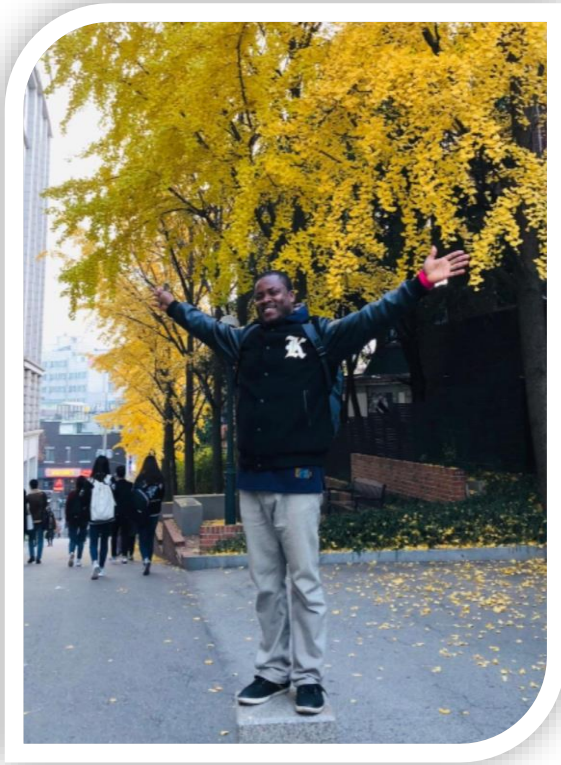
2007~2018

Region	Country	# of Students	Sub-total	Region	Country	# of Students	Sub-total		
Western Asia	Azerbaijan	3	12	Latin America	Colombia	4	29		
	Iraq	1			Dominican Republic	1			
	Palestine	3			Ecuador	10			
	Yemen	5			El Salvador	2			
Eastern Asia	Mongolia	5	5		Guatemala	7			
Central Asia	Kazakhstan	5	15		Honduras	1			
	Kyrgyzstan	4			Nicaragua	1			
	Uzbekistan	6			Paraguay	2			
Southeast Asia	Cambodia	12	50		Northern Africa	Algeria		3	14
	East Timor	6				Egypt		10	
	Indonesia	13		Tunisia		1			
	Laos	6							
	Myanmar	3							
	Philippines	2							
	Vietnam	8							
South Asia	Bangladesh	3	30	Middle Africa	Cameroon	1	3		
	Nepal	10		DR Congo	2				
	Pakistan	6		Western Africa	Ghana	14	17		
	Sri Lanka	11			Nigeria	3			
Eastern Europe	Belarus	2	3	Eastern Africa	Ethiopia	5	44		
Ukraine	1		Kenya		6				
Melanesia	Fiji	6	8		Mozambique	1			
	Papua New Guinea	2				Rwanda		8	
					Total			230	





# Alumni Spotlight



My life in KU and South Korea in general was an exciting one and I must say years on I am missing Korea till date. After our a very intense semester, my KOICA Fellows appointed me as their king (or course prefect). Together with our course Queen (Rani Qayyum from Pakistan) and the full cooperation from my 2017 KOICA fellows and immense support from the Teaching Assistants (TAs), we ensured an atmosphere of friendliness and family throughout our stay on campus.

I personally found Korea exciting and welcoming with different opportunities to form social bonds. I joined the St. Francis Catholic church in Hangangjin where I was given the opportunity to read at church during the English Mass and also joined the church choir. Beyond this, I joined the Salem Worship Choir; a non-denominational choir with members from different part of the world.

This offered me a great place for social support, and an informal environment to learn more about the culture and language of South Korea.

We experienced an inclusive community that enabled us express our culture by forming a Ghanaian students-based cultural troupe. As a lead drummer of the troupe we named Akwabaa cultural troupe in Seoul, I participated in several cultural shows entertaining Koreans while showcasing the rich culture of Ghana to the world. Our audiences were welcoming to the point of encouraging their children to learn how to drum and dance with us. Our troupe was invited to various communities in and around Seoul.

During our second semester, we had opportunity to choose some subjects from five (5) Area Studies subjects of which I choose to study “Religion in Korea”. I chose this because I thought the study of religion was easy and will not require much of my learning time. After going the course outline and requirement, I realized the course was equally involving requiring weekly review and submission of academic papers on the subject.

This, coupled with my interest on how culture influenced the Korea development, got me to give the course the needed attention. Through my readings I discovered that religion, values and ethics were important drivers of the Korean phenomenal development story. I used my term paper in “Religion in Korea” to further study the interplay of culture, values ethics and development. I gave this term paper my best because of my interest in the topic and also because I thought I might as well make an A+ if I had to invest that much time in the course. After submission of my paper, my professor informed me that it could be considered for publishing. He recommended the publishers and supported me through the entire review process and the paper was published in Asian Journal of Religion and Society Vol.6



My final thesis was inspired by my admiration for the Korean tax administration system as I had come to know it through my studies. Visiting the Korea Institute of Public Finance (KIPF), Korea National Tax Service (NTS) and Knowledge Sharing Program at the Korea Development Institute (KDI) revealed policy interventions that transformed tax administration in Korea since 1995. While I was interested in

writing on tax administration, my visit to these institutions gave me a clearer perspective for my final thesis. My thesis titled ‘the key drivers of Value Added Tax Revenue in Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) from Cross Country Panel Data was subsequently revised and published in International Area Studies Review, Vol.23, No.1, 2019 with the support of my thesis supervisor Dr. Jung-Ho Kim. My work as a tax administrator in the policy and program department of the Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA) has been largely influenced by the key findings and policy recommendations in my thesis. For example, I am the project lead for VAT Raffle and Restructuring of the domestic tax offices projects in GRA. These two initiatives seek to enhance domestic tax administration in Ghana.

Korea presents vast opportunity to international students. Specifically, Korea University (KU) with its excellent learning environment and inspiring lecturers offers students great opportunity for academic and professional growth. I encourage all current and potential students to make the best of it.

**Thomas Tsoeke Kwabla Agorsor (KOICA 2017) / Ghana Revenue Authority, Policy and Programs Department / Ghana**

# Class of 2018

## *Staying at South Korea—Unforgettable moments*



The Master's event by KOICA-KU GSIS Scholarship Program (SP) was indeed a life changing experience for me altogether. On August, 2018 I landed at Incheon airport, South Korea with a hope and thirst for knowledge and experience and my thirst and quench was fully satisfied by Korea University and KOICA authority. So first of all, I want to thank Bangladesh and the South Korean government to make this happen in my life. My staying at Korea was a pleasant and soothing one. Before the program started, the KOICA authority gave us a clear guideline about how to stay in Korea and how to make life easy here. Honestly speaking I never felt that I was away from friends and family because I made a lot of new friends. Korea University is the number one private university in Korea. So it was a great honor to be able to study here. The educational system, classrooms, facilities, faculties everything was above expectation. The teachers were very knowledgeable and helpful. We had very informative theory classes, fruitful field visits, rigorous examination system. We had to make a lot of assignments, presentations and a thesis which helped to develop our knowledge base a lot.

Before leaving for South Korea, I was a deputy commissioner at National Board of Revenue, Bangladesh. I was posted at the EPZ. After coming back, I am expecting a promotion very soon. But more importantly I can think about tax related issues with a different eye now. I am contributing in the automation process of our revenue department which I learned from South Korea. I am also able to

gave us a clear guideline about how to stay in Korea and how to make life easy here. Honestly speaking I never felt that I was away from friends and family because I made a lot of new friends. Korea University is the number one private university in Korea. So it was a great honor to be able to study here. The educational system, classrooms, facilities, faculties everything was above expectation. The teachers were very knowledgeable and helpful. We had very informative theory classes, fruitful field visits, rigorous examination system. We had to make a lot of assignments, presentations and a thesis which helped to develop our knowledge base a lot.

Before leaving for South Korea, I was a deputy commissioner at National Board of Revenue, Bangladesh. I was posted at the EPZ. After coming back, I am expecting a promotion very soon. But more importantly I can think about tax related issues with a different eye now. I am contributing in the automation process of our revenue department which I learned from South Korea. I am also able to apply my knowledge about financial security, tax fraud detection, revenue enhancement policies that I learned during my course. The program helped me to learn how to apply an integrated development strategy for the welfare of our country. I believe I can contribute much more efficiently for the betterment of our revenue department.

Last but not the least, I lost my father during my Master's program. Korean government and KOICA authority was very helpful regarding the issue. In fact they granted me immediate leave and sponsored the roundtrip plane fare to visit my family. They also gave me moral support. I will be always grateful to that. I wish a very good luck for all the upcoming events of KOICA-KU GSIS Scholarship Program. May God bless us all.

**Adip Billah / Deputy Commissioner, National Board of Revenue /  
Bangladesh**



# Class of 2018

## *The Experience of a Lifetime*

The nearly year and a half that passed between August 2018 and January 2020 definitely marked my life forever. Having the opportunity of being one of KOICA's fellows for the KU GSIS program was an invaluable experience for me, that shaped me professionally and personally. From the get-go, KOICA was always there to support each student throughout the process of adapting to a new country and totally different culture. From the day of my arrival, I was kindly greeted by the KOICA staff at the airport who guided me to the KOICA Headquarters. I felt to nervous, yet so excited to live this new experience. During my first week in Korea, KOICA made a wonderful welcome by taking me and my fellow classmates to different touristic sites, before taking us to our university. Once we were allocated in our dorms, the KOICA and GSIS staff were very supportive, guiding us throughout our whole journey all the way up to our graduation ceremony and thesis submission, I always felt their support.



The scholarship program is very generous, and it just doesn't get better: I was able to study in one of Korea's most prestigious universities, made amazing friends from all over the world and interacted with world class faculty. Looking back, I feel incredibly lucky to have been able to learn so much from the country's culture, history and future vision. My mindset has opened in ways I could never imagine, thanks to so many cultures and people I was able to network and get to know.

During my stay in Seoul, I was able to assist top-level conferences, workshops and seminars with organizations such as UNDP, Korean development centers (KDI), Korean Ministries and major companies like Hyundai and Douzone just to name a few. This experience is absolutely holistic, and anyone and everyone who has the opportunity MUST participate. I feel that I obtained not only a Master's Degree in International Development and Cooperation but also was awarded with a second family, an international one made up of my 19 fellow classmates whom I spent nearly 2 years with. And of course, a second home which will always be Korea. After this experience, I feel I have the necessary tools to continue my professional path and strive for the betterment of my people and surroundings.

**Daniella Guzman Gomez / Leader of Corporate Relations,  
Invest Pacific / Colombia**



# Class of 2018

## *My experience of KOICA-KU scholarship program*



I am Sunita Paudel, a fellow of KOICA-KU GSIS 2018, currently working in the Inland Revenue Office - Ministry of Finance Nepal. It was a wonderful opportunity to be a student at one of the most prestigious and high-ranking University - KU with 20 government officials arrived from different countries, mostly from emerging and developing economies with a wide range of professional and academic backgrounds.

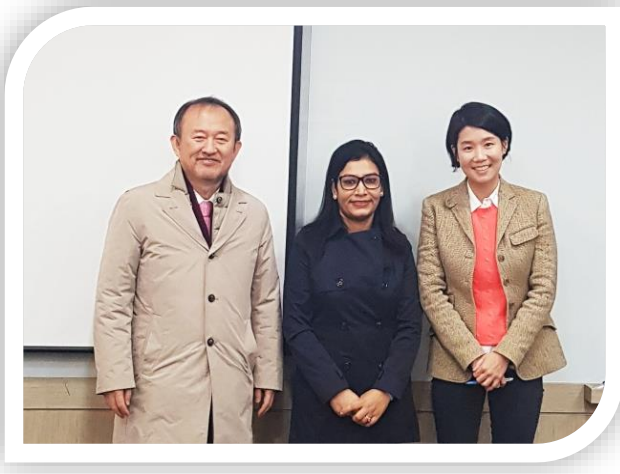
First of all, I am heavily indebted to the Ministry of Finance for providing me such an incredible opportunity to pursue this study and the KOICA team for managing me the financing and logistic support for the successful conclusion of the program. After successfully graduating from there, I joined my office with renewed enthusiasm and conscientiousness, though the last four months were not that eventful due to painful lockdown, travel ban, and stir-craziness caused by the corona virus pandemic, still tremendous uncertainty looming large.

Throughout the 18-months long stay in Korea and particularly Korea University, I was acquainted with diverse opportunities available at this platform. I presume that my stay at Korea University was turned out to be overwhelming phenomenal and quintessential in such that the course was centripetal in the way to teach emerging economists and fiscal policy manager around the globe like me to provide overall theoretical underpinning and hand-on skills that are deemed a prerequisite for evidence-based macro-policy formulation in very robust and subtle ways. To be precise, my journey to Korean University, in particular, has been instrumental mainly in three ways.

First, I gained sound theoretical knowledge predominately related to economics and efficient tax policy formulation. Second, hands-on activities in the classroom and other extra-curriculum activities sharpened my skills in working with data, assimilating ideas and thoughts, policy consequences and its probable outcome and so forth. I believe that it helped me to broaden my imagination and strategy making which are considered critical skills for fiscal policy managers like me. Field trips conducted to the top-brass government offices and industrial districts like Ministry of Economy and Finance - Korea,

Korea Institute of Public Finance (KIPF), Korea Development Institute (KDI), KIA Motors Corporation, National Tax Service Seoul Regional Office and interaction with their executives gave me firsthand ideas about the working procedures, their strategy and the like, through which I could learn how an efficient organizational structure is designed and function so as to deliver an outstanding service to its clients. In addition to this, I learned the best practice and practical experience so that I could imitate such good practice in my workplace to the extent possible. Last but not the least, staying at campus helped me to expand an excellent networking among my course-mates, who had sufficient policy exposure to their respective government, which, I hope, would a never-fading and unending asset throughout my life.

While talking about the utilization of those learning into the workplace, it would be too early to evaluate the impacts and unwise to think that knowledge and skills gained at KU can be used in verbatim fashion in the workplace. In addition, it would be hard to extrapolate the Korean experience to Nepal either. However, it is for sure that this learning and skills have been very instrumental in developing my personality mannerism, inter-personal confidences, and exposures through individual and group presentations/discussions, many hands-on works, term papers, academic research work, and the collaborative team works. Interaction with brilliant professors, faculties, and my course-mate were always been knowledge enhancing.



I believe that it is one of the greatest assets that I have ever achieved in my lifetime. After my return to my workplace, I found myself more confident, enthusiastic, and stubborn. I am encouraged to take challenging responsibilities as I learned how to maneuver and handle such a challenge for the logical ending. I am regularly sharing knowledge with my colleagues about the overall course curriculum, field visits, and development

experiences of Korea. In addition to these academic and personal achievements, classes helped me expand my English language capability particularly academic writing and formal speaking. I am really grateful to professors, faculties, and TA members for choosing and believing me to confer a 'lifetime achievement award' through the Dean of the Graduate School of International Studies. I have felt honor by the achievement, and it has encouraged me to work better in my life and to my workplace.

**Sunita Paudel / Inland Revenue Office, Ministry of Finance /  
Nepal**

# Class of 2019

## *Revitalizing experience in every way*

Back in February 2019 when I heard from my boss about the KOICA scholarship program, encouraging me to apply, my first thought was “No way”; as a 35 years old woman government official, I felt comfortable at my work and personal life. After consulting with my family and especially encouraged by my father I decided to apply and, now I can tell you that even when in 2020 the world and my world has been hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, I have no regrets about coming to Korea University.

After what felt like the longest 39 hours journey, I finally landed in Incheon on August 19, 2019, where I meet Miss Marcella Anrango and Mr. Gustavo Castaneda, my classmates from Ecuador. I remember being greeted by a robot at the airport, it felt like a slap in my face waking me up with a “welcome to South Korea” moment. Three days later, after staying at KOICA ICC for an induction, I was at KU.

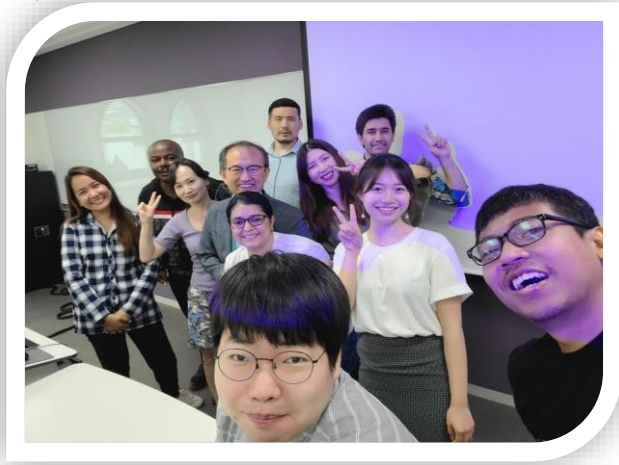


Since the moment I applied for KOICA Scholarship I knew it was going to be a challenge, and it was time to prove to myself that I was capable to overcome it. Very soon I was sitting in my first class at GSIS surrounded by students from South Korea, China, Japan, many European countries, the United States, plus the 17 nationalities of KOICA Students. KU truly brings a global environment, the diversity in academic background, work experience plus the quality of all the professors enrich the

lectures. Two of the classes that I enjoyed the most were Tax Policy and Public Finance, not only because of the quality of the lecture but also because the background of the professors as government officials made it more than a lecture, the class feels like a knowledge exchange between professors and students.

KU administrative staff help me keep up with the challenge every semester, the university also offers all the facilities making possible to keep a balance between academic obligations and recreational activities, as the many libraries, study rooms, labs, outdoor spaces, gardens, sports complex, cinema, convenience stores, restaurants, cafeterias, and medical attention units, are all designed to ensure a pleasant stay. There is a young and contagious university atmosphere on campus and its surroundings that makes you appreciate even the exams weeks full of collective stress, it is all part of university life, I easily embraced it and have enjoyed the ride.

My life outside campus is no less interesting. Although Korean cuisine was the wakeup call that I was on the other side of the world as everything was different compared to what I was used eat, yet Korea surprised me. I am loving how fresh, healthy, and how tasty the food can be, especially the traditional Samgyeopsal where eating is a perfect excuse to meet my friends and it is also a good place where the nightlife starts.



I must divide my friends in Korea into three groups, the first and most significant are the 19 KOICA students who are also my classmates. With them I have had an incredible cultural exchange and we have also lived together happy moments and sad moments that we have managed to handle as a family maintaining harmony, respect, and admiration between us.

The second group is the two Korean buddy assigned to us by KU, James and Kira have been wonderful. The excursions in Seoul were always oriented to introduce us to Korean history and culture, always ready to talk about any topic of the Korean situation for our best understanding. The third group is made up of my Korean friends, this group of Korean friends who are not related to KU and who I got to know throughout the winter holidays are the direct responsible for my taste for Korean food. With them I have visited neighborhoods and Traditional Seoul markets, restaurants visited by locals and all those corners of the city that are not in the tourist guides, in short, they have adopted me as their friend and with it, I have known the Korean customs and personality.

Maybe, cataloging my experience in Korea as “Revitalizing” can be considered extreme for some, considering that the year 2020 has been marked by negative events in the world and in my personal life. However, I am convinced that by the end of this program I will be a better government official and a better person. During these months I have put my world in perspective, analyzing and evaluating my actions and their impact on my work. Thanks to KOICA and Korea University I now have more tools to better serve my country.

**Aniuska Fabiane Abea Gomez / Department of Economic Studies, Nicaraguan National Assembly / Nicaragua**



# Class of 2019

## *Korea Experience for the Future*

Pursuing master's degree overseas is one of my goals and I honored that KOICA provided me with great opportunities to study in Korea and I was able to enroll in one of the most prestigious institutions, Korea University. The day when I departed from Soekarno Hatta International Airport Jakarta in August 2019 marked as new journey which I believe would change my entire life. I am grateful to become KOICA Scholarship Awardee since I received good treatment in terms of preparation, departure, until technical matters upon my arrival in Korea. From administration process in Indonesia to our stay in the KOICA ICC Headquarters and Korea University are exceptionally smooth and well prepared. The benefit which KOICA provided allows me to study in good environment without thinking any life difficulties as international student. KOICA keeps support and assist us to ensure we could have good education experience in Korea. I would say that not all international students could have these privileges as much as KOICA scholars have.



Student life in Korea University was awesome. The lectures were designed to improve our skills in International Development areas especially related with Finance and Tax Policy. The Professors are deeply passionate to share the knowledge and we got chance to do some field trip activities such as Douzone and KDI to learn more about finance and tax Implementation and Korea's development.

The campus facility is particularly good ranging from library; one of the biggest academic library systems in Korea; to recreational activities such as gymnasium and ice rink. The campus also very close to subway station and bus stop which allow us to access any points in Seoul City. Through this program I am able to meet other Government official from 16 different countries with different occupation. It allows me to learn about their culture as well as their expertise which enrich my views about international relations. In fact, they become my new family in Korea which we spend and share joy, happiness, and challenges together.



By taking KOICA SP, I got a chance not only to develop my academic knowledge, but also to explore Korean culture more. I was able to visit some places in Seoul, Incheon, Gyeonggi, Gangwon, Sejong, Daejeon, South Chungcheong, Daegu, Busan, and Jeju Island. The thing that I loved the most about living in Korea is how magnificent the infrastructure

connects every parts of the country. Traveling around Korea is amazingly easy and convenient due to transportation integration. I also feel safe and never experience unpleasant moments during my stay here. Korea is a good sample how poor nation evolves to be advanced one. From the bitter history, they could grow and build from the scratch which can inspire all the developing country to be the same. I am really glad to be part of this program since I could learn and experience the result of “*Miracle of the Han River*” which provides me an insights to contribute further for the enhancement of my country after finishing the program. Hence, I would like to express my gratitude to KOICA and Korea University for the one in a lifetime opportunity which I believe will be beneficial for my future career as well as future development of Indonesia.

**Fajar Ardyantara Sutanto / General of Customs and  
Excise Directorate, Ministry of Finance / Indonesia**

# Class of 2019

## *Social distancing with a personalized touch at KU GSIS*

My name is Gustavo Castaneda, on behalf of the Ministry of Production, Foreign Trade, Investment and Fisheries of Ecuador, I want to express my sincere gratitude to The Korean People and their Government officials in the Korean International Cooperation Agency KOICA and their support teams, who made possible the immersive experience in the 2019-2021 Master's Degree Program on Finance and Tax Policy hosted at the Graduate School of International Studies at beautiful Korea University's Seoul campus. Sincerely, my deepest love for Maria Cristina, my wife, and Gustavo Sr. and Maria, my parents, to whom I dedicate this accomplishment.



In context, I have always embraced opportunities. As an undergraduate student, a bilingual business finance program at the Universidad San Francisco de Quito, a Liberal Arts school in Ecuador, allowed me to intern with the United Nations' World Food Program (WFP), focusing on a collaborate effort between the WFP, local authorities, and parents to deliver basic education

to villages. Indeed, getting children into schools was an inspiring experience. Later, two internships in the banking and financial sector helped launch my career. Despite a two-digit unemployment rate, I commenced work as a Portfolio Officer in a Latin American sector that is rapidly expanding, as new financial tools like mortgage-backed securities increase financing sources in cities. My work gave me experience with credit and bonds, institutional investors, pension funds and savers, as well as with mortgage banks, developers, and households. I was fortunate to contribute to the first mortgage portfolio securitization process undertaken in Ecuador.

Part of my task as an Investment Promotion Specialist is to support fresh investments into 'greenfield and brownfield' projects by servicing a one-stop-shop solution for foreign businesses in need of profitable opportunities and a soft-landing in a small yet dynamic economy. My short-term goal was to continue expanding my professional training across several functional disciplines. Consequently, a clear objective when I looked up to Korea was to complement management expertise with an International Cooperation and Development piece to the web of trade agreements and double taxation treaties between Ecuador and the East Asia-Pacific region. Comprehensive knowledge of such arrangements is critical to competition within free-market economies, and particularly essential in the trade and logistics hubs of the Pacific Rim, all while understanding the competitive business environment differences between the Andean nation and Korea.

In a quick flashback, during my busy days of back-to-back meetings, I would stay in my office after-hours reading about KOICA SP. Although I barely met the requirement that read 'preferably candidates

under 40 years old', I gave it a try. Indeed, I decided to apply to one of the *SKY* universities. Two months later, I was enjoying lunch with H.E. Korean Ambassador to Ecuador and learning to write my name in Hangul along with 11 other Ecuadorian public servants during our official farewell ceremony in KOICA-Ecuador. Flying from Quito, the capital, took nearly 30 hours before arriving in Seoul on August 19, 2019.



After a welcoming 2-day orientation at the International Cooperation Center, 20 students from 17 countries finally arrived at KU. Chiefly, I chose KU for three bold reasons. First, KU's prestige and recognition that place it within the top 70 universities in the world and International Accreditations. Admittedly, I was impressed by GSIS's superior commitment to education and a well-rounded curriculum taught by superb faculty and practitioners who have advised dozens of developing countries.

And third, the KU Seoul campus's prime location makes it convenient to be near everything in Korea's main metropolis. As if it was yesterday, I remember our heartfelt ceremony from KU-GSIS authorities lead by Professor Kang Kyuwon and her team. Remarkably, Miss Chaeyoon Kim, Assistant Coordinator for 2019 KOICA SP, a young bright student, has been key to us from beginning to end. Quickly, my fellow scholars became my family; campus life was easy to adapt as it offered a plethora of opportunities to get involved. It was not long before I joined the Society for Climate Change and Sustainable Development, East-Asia Society, and the Squash team hosted in Tiger Dome. I also enjoyed every single outing with my friends from the Korean Buddy program (kudos to James and Sulkira, you rock!), who showed us the best touristic spots in Seoul with their dynamic pro-activeness.

On the academic side, during my first semester at KU-GSIS, I focused on understanding the pre-industrialization era of Korea's development. Fortunately, academic resources also abound on campus, and core compulsory and elective courses reinforce the International Development and Cooperation emphasis. Equally important, the Graduate School of International Studies has on-going lectures and round tables focused on different regions of the world, such as East Asia and the European Union. During the second academic semester, I worked along with faculty and researchers on an ODA *Knowledge Sharing Program* consulting project to improve Ecuador's export promotion efforts to East Asia. The academic and professional credentials acquired provide me a particular background to work on my thesis research on a Latin American region that has opened up to investment from abroad and looks to East Asia as an export destination. My thesis may well lead to an action plan upon my return to my current position at the Vice ministry of Export and Investment Promotion.



Perhaps, the 2019-2021 KOICA SP group will be remembered for facing the worldwide outbreak of the COVID-19 health pandemic during our spring semester. Fortunately, we witnessed first-hand the successful management of the situation by the Korean authorities. However, administrative personnel and professors devised creative ways to deliver lectures and interact with students.

For instance, one core course required 1-2 students to attend the classroom to present on an assigned topic to the rest of the class through one of several online platforms available at KU. On-line courses rather brought us closer together to work on assignments and projects from our Anam Global House (AGH) dormitory. Certainly, there are substantial lessons (tacit and explicit) that western nations can take from Korea's emergency management response. KOICA SP participants, who may one day be decision-makers back in our country, will always look to Korea for exemplary public policy practices in the search to improve the life of our people.



Finally, my ultimate goal once I complete the Master's program is to influence the construct of policy on export and investment incentives that Ecuador is consistently offering multinationals, foreign, and national investors, especially Korean. KU-GSIS is already helping me achieve my short and long-term goals by providing me with the global perspective I expected. The Master's Degree Program on Finance and Tax Policy from KU-GSIS has allowed me to broaden my historic vision of Korea, expand my knowledge of public finance and tax policy, and develop to my full potential as a government official. To be sure, I will carry KU in my hearth with enthusiasm wherever I go. Ultimately, it will challenge me to transcend the limits of living in a developing nation. Eventually, I want to pursue a Doctorate. My deepest thanks to the KU-GSIS Coordination Office.

**Gustavo Xavier Castaneda Apolo / Investment and Reinvestment Promotion  
Directorate, Ministry of Industry, Foreign Trade, Investment and Fishery / Ecuador**

# Class of 2019

## *My Experiences at Korea University*



Korea University is one of South Korea's leading universities, ranked among the top 100 universities in the 2019 QS World University Rankings. There have been several factors that have led me to apply for a KOICA scholarship and become part of this prestigious university. I would just like to mention a few: the quality of education, services for international students, and the high rate of career placement among others.

One of the key factors that brought me here was the relevance of the degree program to my work as a tax policy expert in my ministry. The journey started with an invitation from our HR to the Head of Departments to send KOICA scholarship nominations. Out of the over 20 nominations from all departments, 5 of us were selected to apply for a scholarship through the Korean Embassy in Harare and at the end of the process I was the only one selected to study for a Master's degree in Finance and Tax Policy. The application process was straight-forward. For me, the tricky bit was the personal statement, but with the help of the KOICA alumni in my ministry, I managed to make it perfect. It was also helpful to meet with colleagues who had previously studied at KU, giving me an insight into what the lecturers at KU would be looking for.

***My experience so far?*** *“Travel makes one modest. You see what a tiny place you occupy in the world. (Gustave Flaubert)”* True to the above statement, traveling to South Korea, has made me understand that there is a world with endless possibilities and opportunities! My experience at the Korea University so far has been mostly amazing, but I've faced a couple of challenges that I haven't anticipated before I started. In such a short time, I've learned and experienced so many new things, and it's gone so fast. KU not only encourages me to be academically strong, it also makes me a better person in my life. Let me elaborate a little on this one, there are several qualities that I have learned from fellow Korean students and lecturers in particular. First of all, being punctual, back home, I'm known as a stickler of time, but seeing every professor practicing it was very encouraging. Second, the work ethic of the professor in terms of course preparation and content was highly inspiring, which prompted me to prepare in time for valuable additions to lectures. In particular, I would like to pay tribute to Professors Jae-Jin Kim and John Kim of the KIPF. It was an honor and a privilege to sit under their lectureship for two semesters. Their years of experience in tax policy and public finance respectively, have provided valuable knowledge and insights that money can not buy. They clearly explained everything from theory to practical application of various policies adapted to our experience in developing countries. Furthermore,



they have expertly made us understand the experience of Korea and how we can learn some lessons from the country's experience. I would like to thank KOICA for including these professors in the program, and I am forever grateful.

However, like many other students and in particular married students, I missed home far

far more than I expected. The adjustment of being away from my family was not easy especially during this period of the Covid-19 pandemic that we are living under. I also lost my niece while I was here, and it wasn't easy not being there for the funeral to pay my last respects to her and comfort the family. The second challenge was accommodation. It was not easy to share a room with another adult, especially sharing a bathroom and a toilet with other students was not easy to adjust. I was overjoyed when we moved to Anam Global House in January with decent accommodation. I have made many new friends from different countries and many different backgrounds. These are from Uzbekistan, Kenya, Ghana, Egypt, Indonesia, Philippines, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Afghanistan, Timor Leste, Vietnam and Tanzania, these are students in my class and my dormitory in residence and that has allowed me an insight into their cultures and religion.

During the first semester, we were able to participate in a field trip to Douzone IT Group, in Chuncheon. The company is number one in corporate information software, including accounting programs, ERP, IFRS solutions, groupware, information protection, and electronic tax invoices. Of particular interest to me was the tax invoices of particular interest to me was the tax invoices which our country needs to complete our tax reform initiatives and improve domestic resource mobilization by plugging loopholes which allows tax evasion by businesses and individuals. During our tour, we received warm welcome from all company employees including the company president who devoted the whole business day hosting us. Such hospitality and humility was just heartwarming and humbling.

***What is the best thing about being in Seoul?*** Seoul, the capital of South Korea, is a huge metropolis where modern skyscrapers, high-tech subways, palaces and street markets. A couple of things impressed me when I arrived at Incheon International Airport, was how big the airport was and how uncrowded it was compared to Ad Bole International Airport in Ethiopia where I had connected through. Our transfer



from the airport even though it was at night it was impressive the spaghetti highways without potholes and the skylights as we cruised from Incheon to Seoul in a Mercedes Benz Van provided by KOICA. I was particularly impressed by the facilities at KOICA's ICC Centre where we spent our first couple of days for orientation before moving to the KU campus.



Outside of my studies it's great having the independence to experience city life. Travel around Seoul is super easy with the subway or busses, though personally I prefer the latter as I get to see areas around unlike being underground. The fares are reasonably cheap costing around W1,150. Together with my other four friends, I spend a fair amount of time walking the streets of Seoul for exercise and experience the fresh air breeze of being outside towards day end. I especially love the parks in Seoul they're beautiful in Autumn because of the color. At first, I struggled getting used to Korean cuisines and frequented western fast-food outlets, but as time went on, I have become used to and enjoy Korean food. However, I am still fully to enjoy eating kimchi.

Lastly, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to KOICA 2019 TA Ms. Chaeyoon Kim and our buddy Ms. Ella for always being there to assist even beyond call of duty, you are all are very much appreciated and always rely on your kind help.

**Melusi Tshuma / Revenue and Tax Policy Department,  
Ministry of Finance and Economic Development / Zimbabwe**



# Class of 2019

## *KU Life is a Bowl of Bibimbap*

My journey as a KOICA graduate student at Korea University (KU) is a bowl of Bibimbap. Bibimbap is a mix of many things like rice, tons of different vegetables, meat, gochujang (spicy sauce), and a fried egg on top. It may seem that mixing them all together does not make sense, but when you get to eat it, the flavors start to burst into your mouth. My life as a KOICA graduate student is comparable because it is a mix of happiness, tons of lectures, unexpected challenges, friendships, and victories.



It all starts with the rice. It is the most basic ingredient for the dish, and it cannot be called Bibimbap without the rice. It must be fresh and well-cooked because it will affect the quality of the Bibimbap. I am the rice in my journey as a KOICA scholar. Being accepted at Korea University, one of the top universities in Korea and Asia, is both an opportunity and a challenge. It is an opportunity because I have the chance to improve myself in my field. Being able to specialize in Finance and Tax Policy is going to help my institution and our government back in the Philippines. But it is also a challenge for me. I have very little finance and economic background, however, rising above it is a must. I have to be ready to meet the standards that Korea University and KOICA have set, both in academics and in living in Korea. Just like the rice in Bibimbap, I have to make sure that I am well-prepared to be successful.

During the duration of the program, I have met diverse people from different countries with unique cultures. My fellow KOICA scholars, despite these differences, have instantly become my friends. We help each other in times of need. We explore places and discover Korean culture together. Most importantly, we learn many things from each other. Our differences are our strengths rather than our weakness. Our respect for each makes our bond stronger. Our Korean buddies also help us in adjusting to the country. They give us tips about life in the university and help us learn more about daily living in Korea. Our KOICA student coordinator also checks on us from time to time to see if we are doing well. She is also instrumental for our fast adjustment in the country as she is ready all the time to answer our

queries. These people are like vegetables in Bibimbap. They give colors to my life and provide me with things that I need to make my stay in Korea more enjoyable.



The meat is also very important for the overall quality of Bibimbap. It differentiates one bowl from the other, whether it has pork, beef, or even both. It is the education I receive from Korea University that sets my journey apart from other scholars here in Korea. At KU, the members of faculty have very strong academic backgrounds which also translate to effective courses they offer. For the KOICA program, we receive strong academic grounding, yet we are

also provided with more practical courses on finance and tax policy that teaches us the Korean experience. The perfect balance between the two is ideal for government practitioners like me. Gochujang or the Korean spicy sauce makes Bibimbap more challenging to eat but it also makes the dish more interesting. Just like my life at KU, it has its challenges. But these challenges teach us more lessons that cannot be learned inside the classroom. One of the biggest challenges we faced and is still facing is the emergence of COVID-19 during our stay. It was tough experiencing this in a foreign land, having no family. But I and my fellow KOICA scholars at KU stuck together and made sure we were there for each other whenever we need support. KU also made sure that we stay healthy by giving us information about the disease and providing us masks and hand wash. The University readily implemented an online mode of learning so that we can continue our education despite what is happening. The Pandemic made us see how Korea handles crises. It showed us how public servants respond to the needs of the public.

Bibimbap is topped with a fried egg. The egg usually means new beginnings, a sign of hope. All the learnings, experiences, and networks I gained as a KOICA scholar at KU hopefully translates into something tangible in the future by applying it in my own country. It gives hope that someday, like Korea, my country will also experience more prosperity, and I will be part of the process. Finally, Bibimbap needs to be mixed to evenly distribute the flavor and create a very tasty but nutritious dish. I hope that my journey as a KOICA KU scholar will also transform into a memorable but meaningful experience that will benefit not only me but also the institution and country I serve.

# Program News

## Conference

2019

### [UNIDO Consulting Meeting]

KOICA 2018 students participated in SECON 2019 (International Security Exhibition & Conference) to provide Individual consultation as overseas government officials.

Date: 2019.03.08

Venue: KINTEX, Ilsan, Gyeonggi-do



### [Continental Meeting]

KOICA students, divided in continents, had discussion and Q&A session regarding the overall study and life in Korea. KU GSIS faculty and staff encouraged KOICA students during the meeting.

Date: 2019.09.02 – 09.05



### [Roundtable]

KOICA 2019 students shared knowledge and ideas about the economy and the tax policy of their home countries

Date: 2019.09.20 / 2019.10.04

Venue: International Studies Hall,  
Korea University





# Extracurricular Activities

2019 / 2020



## [Field trip to Smartium]

KOICA 2018 students went on a field trip to Smartium, the biggest urban convention center in Korea. They witnessed how government policies on residential area, green remodeling, and renewable energy is working.

Date: 2019.06.27

Venue: The Smartium, Gangnam, Seoul

## [UNIDO Internship]

KOICA 2019 students had an opportunity to participate in the internship program in which they experience the practical working conditions.

Date: 2019.09.25 – 09.27



## [Field Trip to DOUZONE]

KOICA 2018 and 2019 students learned about e-receipts and the software system from DOUZONE, the computer programming company.

Date: 2019.11.08

Venue: DOUZONE, Chuncheon-si, Korea







**[KDI GKEDC Workshop]**

KOICA 2019 students learned about Korean economic, industrial development, tax policy history and successful cases to understand the basic concept of development.

Date: 2019.12.03

Venue: Global Knowledge Exchange and Development Centre

**[N Seoul Tower Outing]**

Some of the KOICA 2019 students participated in Namsan Tower Outing. They took the cable car and enjoyed the evening view of Seoul.

Date: 2020.08.07

Venue: N Seoul Tower



**[GKEDC Summer Program]**

KOICA 2019 students explored specific cases from Korea's development history, outlined key lessons and shared relevant knowledge and experience from their home countries.

Date: 2020.08.06 – 08.27

Venue: Global Knowledge Exchange and Development Centre



## *Welcoming Ceremony*

For the Class of 2019 who have been accepted to the KOICA-KU GSIS Master's Degree Program in Finance and Tax Policy, KU GSIS faculty and staff held a welcoming party to encourage and get to know new students.

Date: 2019.08.22  
Venue: Incheon Memorial Hall,  
Korea University



## *Completion Ceremony & Farewell Party*



For the KOICA students who have been studying hard and adjusting in Korea for a year and a half, we held a farewell party to celebrate their completion of Scholarship Program and wishing their dream comes true in their home countries.

Date: 2019.12.19  
Venue: International Studies Hall,  
Korea University