

Second OFID scholarship recipient graduates

In line with OFID's continuous support to education which is one of the Millennium Development Goals, the Governing Board approved in 2007 the establishment of an Annual Scholarship Award. Each year, the OFID Scholarship supports a qualified student from a developing country to pursue higher education in a relevant field of development. The second recipient of this Award, Ms. Ismat Lotia, from Pakistan, recently graduated from John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health with a Master's Degree in Public Health Administration.



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Ms. Ismat Lotia with the Dean of the School of Public Health, Dr. Michael Klag.

The Scholarship Award aims at supporting a highly motivated and academically driven individual from a developing country to overcome one of the biggest challenges: the cost of advanced academic graduate training. The winner of the OFID Award receives a full scholarship of up to US\$100,000 toward the completion of a Master's Degree in a development-related field.

The first winner (2007) was Ms. Leah Manuzon from the Philippines. She has since returned to her country after successfully completing her Masters Degree in the School of Policy, Planning and Development at the University of Southern California, USA.

The second winner of the OFID Scholarship – for 2008/2009 – was Ms. Ismat Lotia from Pakistan. She was offered admission into the Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health to pursue a Masters Degree in Public Health (MPH). The MPH program is designed for individuals who have some experience within the field of development and who wish to build on the experience, academically and professionally, in an intensive capacity. Ms. Lotia aspired to attend this program due to its blend of academic and professional training which she said “truly fulfilled more than I had desired from my graduate education.” Her capstone project involved a data analysis of health-seeking behaviour among a low- to

middle-income urban community in Karachi. “I examined the various socio-economic factors related to the decisions taken by household members to medicate their children at home instead of taking them to a health care provider. This question has implications for health care utilization and service delivery for similar communities in the region,” she explained.

Ms. Lotia, graduated from the program in May 2009, and has returned to work as an epidemiologist and program manager at the NGO “Interactive Research and Development” (IRD) in Karachi. IRD is a non-profit institute that seeks to bring together scientists and entrepreneurs with a view to maximizing the impact of health interventions in poor communities. Ms. Lotia is currently working on a Hepatitis B vaccination delivery project to 50,000 children and newborns in low-income families living within the catchment population of Karachi's Indus Hospital. She said “I hope to focus on further research and development in the prevention of communicable diseases among women and children in South Asia.”

OFID strives to support human capacity building in developing countries in various forms. The Scholarship initiative seeks to guide young men and women from developing countries to make a difference within their communities through the acquisition of higher education. The OFID Scholarship is in its third year. ■