

Franck, graduate of honor of the School of Public Affairs - advisor to the Managing Director at IFC - World Bank Group



Frank Gbaguidi is an advisor to the Managing Director at IFC - World Bank Group, he graduated in 2018 from the Master in Public Policy, Energy, Environment and Sustainability policy stream

You were the graduate of honor of the School of Public Affairs in 2018. Can you describe your academic and professional background?

My university journey was eventful and marked by a series of dual degree programs, each more fascinating than the last. My first one was with Sciences Po and the University of Sorbonne-Paris IV in French Literature and Social Sciences. I then completed a second dual degree at Sciences Po, this time with the University of British Columbia (UBC) in Vancouver, studying Political Science and African Studies. At the graduate level, I started with a program offered by both IRIS Sup' and the University of Western Brittany (UBO) in International Relations and Public Administration. Then, I returned to Sciences Po for a [dual master's degree in Public Policy with Columbia](#) University in New York, specializing in the industries and sectors I liked the most, namely Energy and Environment. I also received a university degree from Paris II-Panthéon Assas in International Economic Law in Africa. Overall, I graduated from seven institutions in seven years.

I started my professional career while I was a student. In fact, I took many gap years. My first real experience was at the International Relations Department of the French National School of

Administration ([ENA](#)), where I was a Program Manager for a year. I organized seminars and study visits for high-ranking civil servants from Africa and the Middle East. I then joined the World Bank as a Jr. International Affairs Associate in the Paris office. At the time, I was working on COP21 and the Bank's relations with European donors. Later on, I moved to Washington, DC and worked as an Analyst to the [World Bank](#)'s Vice President for Africa and as an Infrastructure Specialist in the office of the Vice President for Infrastructure. I am currently working at the [International Finance Corporation](#) (IFC), the private sector arm of the World Bank Group, as an Advisor to the Managing Director.

How did you build your career plan? What were the main steps?

I can pinpoint **three main stages**. The first one would be my **work with student associations** that I always describe as an eye-opening experience which allowed me to build a strong network and develop many skills. I have fond memories of my time with the [Sciences Po Association for Africa](#) (ASPA) as Head of Conferences and with the School of Public Affairs Association ([AEAP](#)) as Student Representative for the Energy track. I met renowned practitioners in my favorite sectors, immersed myself in their research to develop my expertise, and worked tirelessly on projects and events that aimed to challenge the status quo. I loved building bridges between the different student groups and initiatives I was involved in. Come to think of it, I'm sure I spent at least half of my time in university fulfilling my commitments with student associations. These activities have only strengthened my desire to work in the fields of public policy and sustainable development, with a focus on emerging and developing economies.

I also learned a lot from my **interactions with my teachers beyond the classroom**. It was such an honor to work as a Research Assistant to Jonathan Elkind at the [Center on Global Energy Policy](#) in Columbia and shadow Dr. Lisa Dale as Teaching Assistant for her course on Environmental Policy & Governance. These experiences have further shaped my professional priorities and made me want to learn more on my own.

This takes me to the third and final stage: **designing my own research projects**. Looking back, I'm so glad I did many during those years. If I had to pick one, it would be my project on environmental crimes in Benin, sponsored by the Earth Institute, which I see as my introduction to project management. To this day, I still use the skills that I developed then.

Thanks to these three main steps, I was able to lay the foundation for my professional journey in international development.

How was the recruitment process at the World Bank, and what are the main characteristics of your job today?

I owe it all to [Sciences Po Careers](#)! I spent hours sifting through job postings and applying for roles that suited me best. That's how I got my job at the ENA and secured my first experience at the World Bank. For that one, I had a few interviews in the Paris office as well as a written test. In my current role, I advise the Managing Director of IFC, especially on climate change and sustainable development.

With regards to your recent positions, can you tell us how valuable and relevant was

the Master's program of the School of Public Affairs (EAP)?

Highly useful. I particularly appreciated the practical aspects of the EAP training. We had the opportunity to do [Team Projects](#), which are excellent introductions to consultancy work. I did mine with the European Investment Bank ([EIB](#)) on carbon risk management. It was a fantastic experience which inspired me to [create and supervise two Team Projects](#) a few years later and allow Sciences Po students to have their first professional experience at the World Bank.

I also liked the very specializing nature of the program. In my case, I was in the "[Energy, Environment and Sustainability](#)" policy stream, which gave me the opportunity to take highly specialized courses and develop an expertise easily transferable to the World Bank. A concrete example? I recently designed the first course on [clean energy cooking services](#), and the team that I put together is currently working on a second one.

Last but not least, I loved the international aspect of the training. When I joined the EAP, it was the first time that the School was offering master's programs in English. This helped the EAP attract new profiles and enrich the classroom experience. International students brought new perspectives, ideas, and knowledge. Come to think of it, this environment was very similar to my current professional one.

Do you have any advice for students who want to work in the development sector today?

There is no straightforward path to kickstart a career in development and international organizations. Three things can help: being passionate, being proactive, and being patient. This is what I call the rule of the "3Ps": 1) passionate because the international development community can be difficult to apprehend if you don't have a few sectors you're into, 2) proactive because opportunities are hard to come by, and you may have to knock on several doors to build your resume, 3) patient because the recruitment process can be very long, and it often takes a few years to have exciting responsibilities. But it's totally worth it!

To learn more about Franck's academic and professional journey, listen to his audiobook [Finding Your Purpose](#) on majelan.

LEARN MORE:

- [The Energy, Environment and Sustainability policy stream](#)
- [The Master in Public Policy at the School of Public Affairs](#)
- [The dual degree with Columbia University \(New-York, USA\)](#)