

Dear reader,

When I found out about the World Bank Wikipedia contest I immediately knew it was my cup of tea. I am a proud contributor to Wikipedia and the topic of the contest fit well with my ongoing PhD research (which is about development aid in the water sector).

The contest gave me food for thought about something I had largely ignored before: My research is built upon a foundation of very concrete and widely accepted knowledge about water problems in Africa that is deeply rooted in databases of the World Bank, UN, WHO, OECD, ... Although I knew where to unearth those data and reports, non-professionals might not. So, why not write a comprehensive Wikipedia article for the broad public that draws on a fine selection of the most authoritative sources about water in Africa? That's what I did and that's how I won the contest.

I must admit that – apart from the concern to make solid knowledge about a marginalised theme more accessible for the broad public – I was also persuaded by the contest prize: the opportunity to attend the World Bank Water Days in Washington and to meet World Bank people. Sure enough, now that I've been there I can confirm that this invitation to Washington could not have been more rewarding: I learned about the field experiences of World Bank professionals from all over the world; I heard leading experts talking about future strategies; I personally met with World Bank staff that are active in my very specific area of interest; etc.

I left Washington with a better insight in the World Bank's methods and spirit, with new professional contacts in my field of interest, and with a greater enthusiasm for my own research. This inspiring experience in Washington was definitely worth the effort of writing a Wikipedia article from scratch – but the fact that the article is online now and thousands might find it useful, is just as rewarding.

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