

HON. MARCELA ESCOBARI

Marcela has led organizations in government, think tanks and the private sector focused on growing prosperity for all. Marcela has led a 1,000-person team implementing development initiatives as well as successfully led research initiatives and fundraised for centers at Harvard and Brookings Institution. She is an author and speaker in economic development, inclusive growth, migration and workforce development and has represented the administration in congressional testimonies and White House briefings. Most recently, Marcela led President Biden's hemispheric approach to ensure safe, orderly and humane migration at the White House National Security Council. Marcela is recognized for bringing evidence to policy making and effectively driving bipartisan support for administration priorities.

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL, THE WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON, D.C. 2024–2025 **Special Assistant to the President and Coordinator of the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection.**

- In response to historic levels of migration, led a regional response which contributed to an over 75% decrease in irregular migration at the US border in 2024, helping stabilize and integrate over 4.5 million migrants and refugees within Latin America.
- Mobilized \$1.2 billion in 2024 to support the regularization and integration of migrants and refugees in Latin American partner countries; successfully helped migrants access labor markets and restart their lives in other countries.
- Led interagency processes with Department of State, Homeland Security, USAID and others to set policy priorities and diplomatic engagement with 21 countries that led to unprecedented levels of collaborative action including; 11 new regularization programs, launch and renewal of four safe mobility offices to process refugees and expand labor pathways, 300 visa harmonization actions, biometric data sharing and the institutionalization of the LA Declaration framework.
- Led [Third](#) and [Forth](#) ministerial LA Declaration meetings hosted by the U.S. Secretary of State and including 21 countries.

USAID, BUREAU FOR LATIN AMERICA & CARIBBEAN WASHINGTON, D.C. 2022–2024 **Assistant Administrator.** Nominated by President Biden and [confirmed](#) by the U.S. Senate to lead LAC Bureau at USAID comprised of 17 regional missions, 900+ people and over \$1.4B of development funds per year, focused on promoting inclusive growth and good governance.

- Set and implemented an organizational strategy for the bureau tied to outcomes measures, focused on strengthening institutions, supporting democratic reformers, climate finance and improving the productivity of the informal sector to speed economic recovery.
- Led a holistic approach to manage migration flows and the dislocation of 10 million people in the Americas supporting countries in the integration of migrants into host communities, expanding legal pathways and targeting root causes. Incorporated migrant integration into the LA Declaration signed by 22 countries, promoted policy changes in Ecuador and Peru, supported Colombia's bold and generous migrant policies. Doubled H2 visas from Central America, and tripled USAID funding for integration.
- Strengthened democratic institutions and supported reformers during electoral openings in Guatemala, Ecuador and Venezuela, seized on opportunity to liberate [political prisoners](#).
- Drove internal reforms to improve the use of evidence in program design and broaden the pipeline of talent.
- Testified and briefed Congress and on regional priorities; including on [Haiti](#), [Venezuela's](#) crisis, [budget priorities](#), US- [Colombia](#) relations. Drove consensus across the aisle on hemispheric priorities.

BROOKINGS INSTITUTION WASHINGTON, D.C. **Senior Fellow, Global Economy and Development program**

2018–2022

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- Launched a new initiative, [Workforce of the Future](#), to help identify policies to restore opportunity and enable inclusive growth in US cities and states in the wake of globalization and COVID-19. Raised >\$5M and recruited a team of 10.
- Published three major research reports on how to improve economic opportunity for US workers, featured in >30 media outlets from the [NYT](#), [LA Times](#) to [Yahoo Finance](#).
- Developed novel methods, data and [visualization](#) tools (Washington Post [visualization](#)) to help policy makers link growth to workforce needs.
- Addressed how firms and regions can adapt to the future of work. Developed framework for companies to use Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) metrics that improve worker outcomes.

MASTERCARD CENTER FOR INCLUSIVE GROWTH PURCHASE, NY 2017–2018

Senior Advisor. Developed data philanthropy and research initiatives on the effects of credit for small and medium sized enterprises and more effective disbursements of social programs.

USAID, BUREAU FOR LATIN AMERICA & CARIBBEAN WASHINGTON, D.C. 2016–2017

Assistant Administrator. Nominated by President Obama and [confirmed](#) by the U.S. Senate to lead LAC Bureau at USAID comprised of 17 regional missions, 900+ people and over \$1B per year of development funds.

- Advanced key regional priorities of the administration; led changes to strategy, organization and execution to respond to Congress' doubling of funding to Central America to combat root causes of poverty and migration, reinforced U.S. support for Peace Colombia, established a development plan for Haiti post-hurricane, and prepared a proactive strategy to confront the humanitarian and political crisis in Venezuela.
- Worked with Vice President Joe Biden on accelerating implementation of the \$750 million Alliance for Prosperity in Central America. Deployed 70 new people in the field in two months, got Agency to prioritize hiring and procurement, and pushed in-depth analysis of opportunities for investments in each country.
- Advocated and implemented outcome metrics of success (jobs, reduction of crime, governance) and the increased use of local organizations to implement programs to strengthen in-country institutional capacity.
- Launched first external [research](#) initiative in the LAC bureau using Department of Homeland Security data, connecting development programs on violence reduction to lower immigration. This evidence helped garner support across the aisle to maintain the root cause approach to managing migration in Central American as opposed to only border control.
- Worked with the bureau of Disaster, Humanitarian and Conflict Assistance to place Venezuela on a watch list and present policy options. Efforts led to the House passing the [Venezuela Humanitarian Assistance and Defense of Democratic Governance Act of 2017](#), approving the flow of funds for the refugee crisis.

HARVARD CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT CAMBRIDGE, MA 2007–2016

Executive Director. Worked with 50 faculty associates and 80 staff and fellows to develop breakthrough research to eradicate poverty and increase the flow of insight to public and private sector leaders. Became one of Top Five International Think Tanks in the World by UPenn ranking.

- Grew organization from 3 to 80 fellows and staff, and from \$2m to \$10m yearly budget, raising over \$20 million in new sources of revenue. Top performing center at the Harvard Kennedy School in managed funds per employee.
- Developed strategy and restructured organization to hone focus from over 20 projects to 3 major programs focused on growth, evidence-based policy making and governance.
- Launched three sub-national economic mapping projects in Colombia, Mexico and Peru, turning government data and new economic theories into online data visualization tools to aid investment decisions.

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- Launched the Empowerment Lab, executive education programs, a yearly [global forum](#) and leveraged technology to reach broader audiences, including interactive online tools including [The Online Atlas](#) with over 1M unique views. Topics included growth, entrepreneurship, and inclusive development.

OTF GROUP, FORMERLY MONITOR GROUP (DELOITTE), WATERTOWN, MA 2001–2007

Director. Advised countries on economic development. Led programs to strengthen the competitiveness of industry clusters (in agriculture, manufacturing, tourism, etc.) and companies in countries in Latin America and Africa.

J.P. MORGAN, LATIN AMERICA MERGERS & ACQUISITIONS NEW YORK, NY 1996–1998

Financial Analyst. Performed financial and strategic analyses for mergers and acquisitions in consumer products, telecommunications and financial services. Identified buyers/sellers, conducted negotiations.

EDUCATION

HARVARD KENNEDY SCHOOL, MASTERS IN PUBLIC POLICY 1999-2001

Concentration in Science, Technology and Public Policy. Won Best Policy Application Exercise award of graduating class. Master's thesis topic: *Assessing Network Applications for Economic Development*.

SWARTHMORE COLLEGE, B.A. IN ECONOMICS 1992-1996

AWARDS, DISTINCTIONS AND BOARDS

- Received Freedom House's [Palmer Prize](#) that recognizes exceptional achievements to protect and advance democracy by diplomats and officials, on behalf of USAID (2024).
- Named **Distinguished Non-resident Senior Fellow** at the Center for Global Development (2025)
- Board member of **Root Capital** Global nonprofit focused on financing rural development (2011-16)
- Named **Distinguished Judge of the St. Gallen Symposium** (2016-23)
- Selected as **Expert of the World Economic Forum Global Agenda Council on Clean Air (2024) and Futures Council on Production (2017)**.
- Named **Young Global Leader** by the World Economic Forum (2013).
- Co-led the Development, Global Health and Refugee policy working group, the **Biden campaign** (2020)
- Top Secret/SCI security clearance.

Languages: Spanish (native) — English (fluent) — Portuguese (proficient)

Publications: Authored three major publications ([Moving Up](#), [Realism about Reskilling](#) and [Growing cities that Work for All](#)) on increasing economic opportunity in the U.S., multiple articles, podcasts and Op-Eds, and authored and edited the book, [In the River they Swim: Essays from around the World on Enterprise Solutions to Poverty](#) (list of additional selected publications below).

Public Speaking: Testified before Congress, led White House Press Briefings, spoken to live audiences of over 1000 people, and led discussions in forums such as the [Aspen Ideas Festival](#), St. Gallen Symposium and the World Economic Forum.

PUBLICATIONS

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BOOKS AND REPORTS

- [Moving Up](#): Promoting workers' upward mobility using network analysis, Washington D.C.; Brookings Institution, Co-authored with I. Seyal, C. Daboin (June 2021). Brookings Cafeteria [Podcast](#).
- [Realism about Reskilling](#): Upgrading the career prospects of America's low wage workers, Washington D.C.; Brookings Institution, Co-authored with I. Seyal, J. Morales, C. Shearer (December 2019)
- [Growing cities that Work for All](#): A capability based approach to regional economic competitiveness. Washington D.C.; Brookings Institution, Co-authored with I. Seyal, M. Meaney (May 2019)
- [In the River they Swim: Essays from around the World on Enterprise Solutions to Poverty](#). Philadelphia; Templeton Press, Editor and author M. Escobari, Fairbanks, Fal & Hooper, (2009).
- Author of Chapter 13: Selling Culture without Selling Out, on the Jamaican music industry, Kingston, Jamaica, pg. 103-133, Chapter 22: Praying to the Virgin of Guadalupe, on competitiveness lessons for Mexico, Mexico City, pg 188- 195

JOURNAL ARTICLES, TESTIMONY AND OP-EDS, SELECTED:

- [6 Job Quality Metrics Every Company should Know](#), Brookings Institution, Oct 2021.
- ["How Federal Infrastructure Investment can Put America Back to Work"](#), with D.Gandhi, S. Strauss, Brookings Policy Brief, March 2021. Brookings Cafeteria [Podcast](#).
- ["Why it's harder for American workers to get ahead, and what we can do about it"](#), Brookings Institution Podcast, August 2021
- ["New but narrow job pathways for America's unemployed and low-wage workers"](#), Brookings Institution Up Front, with I. Seyal and C. Daboin, Nov 2020, covered in NYT.
- ["Dislocation of labor markets: What policies to mitigate the shock"](#), published with [VoxEU](#) and Brookings, co- authored with Eduardo Levy Yeyati, November 2020
- ["How the next recovery can revive upward mobility"](#), Harvard Business School Managing the Future of Work, Podcast, June 2020
- ["Reopening America & the World"](#), Brookings publication, Ch 7, "Three ways to preserve jobs", June 2020
- ["The Economy is growing and leaving low-wage workers behind"](#), Brookings Institution, December 2019
- ["Measuring the American Gig Workers is Difficult, but Essential"](#), Brookings Institution Up Front, co-authored with Sandy Fernandez, July 2018
- ["America needs a new game plan for Venezuela"](#) The National Interest, co-authored with Michael O-Hanlon, March 21, 2019
- [Made by Maduro: The Humanitarian Crisis in Venezuela and US Policy Responses](#), Testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs on the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela and options for the U.S. policy response follow. February, 2019
- ["How Foreign Aid helps Grand Rapids, Michigan"](#) Bloomberg View, July 2017
- ["Ukraine's real problem, in four graphs,"](#) Boston Globe, Ideas section, 2014
- "A review of evidence on mobile use by micro and small enterprises in developing countries" *Journal of International Development*, Escobari, M. & Donner, J. (2010), 22, 641-658. doi: 10.1002/jid.1717
- "For poor people a mobile can also mean a bank", Parliamentary Brief, The Independent Commentary on Political Affairs, October 2008

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- “Building Competitive Advantage”, *From Growth to Prosperity, Policy Perspective for Trinidad and Tobago, IADB Special Publications on Development*, M. Escobari, Fairbanks, Rabkin, Rodriguez, 2006, p. 187-258
- [Improving Competitiveness and Increasing Economic Diversification in the Caribbean: The Role of Information and Communication Technology \(ICT\)](#), M. Escobari, C. Rodriguez, D. Rabkin, InfoDev, 2005
- “Un Gigante Dormido: Cinco Opciones para La Competitividad en Mexico”, *PODER Magazine*, Mexico edition, May 2005
- *Assessing Network Applications for Economic Development*, co-author. Published at the Kennedy School of Government, Supported by the CID at Harvard and the Media Lab at MIT, received Best PAE Award, 2001
- “Governance for the XXI Century; The transition to E-government” in *Semana* magazine, Web Edition, 2000.
- “NATURA: The Magic Behind Brazil’s Most Admired Company”, Case Study, London Business School Press, 1999.

CONFERENCES AND SPEAKER ENGAGEMENTS

Frequent speaker on issues of international development and competitiveness.

Representative examples:

- **The Wilson Center**, speaker on [Major Changes to US Migration Policy in the Americas](#), Feb 2025
- **The Aspen Ideas Festival**, “*At Americas Edge: Border Politics, Policy and People*”, with David Miliband, Rep. Crenshaw, Jonathan Blitzer. Aspen, CO, June 2024
- **21st Annual Immigration Law & Policy Conference**, Georgetown University. Speaker on “[Unilateral No More: The Rise of Regional Cooperation on Migration](#)”, (minute 14) Washington, DC, Sept 2024
- **The Atlantic Future of Work conference**, Interview with Google.org about recent publication, “Realism about Reskilling”, to audience of 500+ future of work experts. New York, NY, December 2019
- **St Gallen Symposium, 48th** annual conference, Topic leader for keynote panel “*Beyond the End of Work*” to audience of 800 European leaders of different generations. St Gallen, Switzerland, May 2018
- **World Economic Forum Regional Summit in Latin America**. Speaker in panel on “*Migration in Latin America: Between Economic Mobility and Humanitarian Displacement*”, Led interactive session on “*Promoting women entrepreneurs in Latin America*”, invited to participate in closed session with regional leaders on “*Developing a New Narrative for Latin America*”. Sao Paulo, Brazil, April 2018
- **FSG Shared Value Conference**, participated in *Better than Cash Alliance* to discuss case studies on the use of corporate data to get insights on improving the welfare of informal entrepreneurs in Kenya. NY, May 2018
- **Policy Link Equity Summit**, led panel on “*Inclusive Workplaces, Thriving Communities: Foundations for Economic Opportunity*” Chicago, April, 2018
- **Bruegel Conference**, panelist on “*People on the Move: Immigration and Integration in the European Union*” for European policy makers and press in advance of elections Rome, Italy, March 2018
- **Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)**, Speaker at event on the launch of the Report “[Achieving Growth & Security in the Northern Triangle of Central America](#)”, Session opened with Sen. Tim Kaine, Washington, DC, December, 2017
- **World Economic Forum**, Member of the Shaping the Future of Manufacturing and Production, participated in workshop on *Employment and Skills in the future of Production*, WEF Center for the Fourth Industrial Revolution, San Francisco, CA, December 2017. Annual Meeting of the Global Future Councils 2017 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, November, 2017
- **TrAD Works Forum**, speaker at “The Global Impact of TrAD workforce”, on the impact of remote and contract

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work on workforce stability and progress, Washington, DC, Oct, 2017

- **House Foreign Affairs Western Hemisphere Subcommittee Hearing** on "[Nicaragua's Economic Collapse](#)", with State Department. Washington, DC September, 2016
- **Senate Foreign Relations Committee**, [Testimony](#) as appointee for Assistant Administrator for the Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean before. Washington, February 2016
- **World Economic Forum Annual Meeting**, led panel on "*Cross Sector Leadership*" with David Rubenstein and "*Designing out of Poverty*" with Google, Davos, Switzerland, 2015
- **Harvard's Symposium on Inclusive Growth and Development**, moderated conference and presented on data-intensive solutions to drive inclusion. Cambridge, October 2015.
- **Atlantic Council**, Panel [speaker](#) on "Social Progress Reconsidered: What really is Success?" on new measures of social progress. Washington, DC October 2015.
- **Zermatt Summit Keynote Speaker**, "The courage to develop the world", Zermatt, Switzerland 2014
- **Specialist Speaker at CLSA Investor Forum**, for 500 fund managers, on "New Theories on Growth" focused on Japan's options for diversification. San Francisco, Hong Kong, March & Sept. 2010.
- **Keynote at "International Conference of Social Women Entrepreneurs"**, FONAES, Audience of over 1,000 women entrepreneurs, Mexico City, April 2006
- Led **World Bank Workshop** "*Growth, Competitiveness and the Role of Information and Communications Technologies in the Caribbean*", World Bank InfoDev Group, Barbados, 2005
- **Social Entrepreneurship Conference**. "*Venture Capital and Entrepreneurship in Emerging Markets: An Engine for Innovation and Development*", Harvard Business School and Kennedy School, March 7, 2004