

**CORE ISSUES AFFECTING  
WOMEN PROGRESSING TO  
SENIOR MANAGEMENT:  
A COMPARATIVE OVERVIEW  
OF  
THE GLOBAL SOUTH**

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# This research is based on:

- Global statistics
- Secondary sources, literature
- Some additional data from 7 selected countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America, including grey literature and locally collected statistics

# The purpose of this paper

....is to provide an overview for the three case studies that follow, which go in more depth into the issues facing women in Kenya, Argentina, Vietnam

Each country is specific and in some ways unique; this study is intended to help to identify issues that are also widely applicable

The work is broad brush, preliminary and at quite a high level of generalisation

# The global literature suggested

Many issues to look out for. Much was drawn from the global north but there was enough literature from the global south to suggest these are also issues in many countries there

# A review of issues for women in senior management jobs

- Drawing on one recent meeting about these issues, held with 241 women from across the world in London 2010, the critical issues included:
- Tensions around work life balance and the domestic responsibilities for child and other care in the family
- Long working hours and lack of flexibility
- Male dominated cultures
- Lack of confidence/self belief

# For women from the global south

There were other issues also highlighted:

- Lack of access to networks
- Lack of open competition
- Negative attitudes towards women as leaders
- Culture of Ministries and leadership issues
- Age and ethnicity are also key: women are not a homogeneous group

# Overview of the statistical data

- Cautions about the available statistics: they are highly aggregated, little disaggregation by gender around employment and senior employment, different sources differ in their findings, and interpretation of the data is difficult
- That is why the case material for by country is so critical.



# The broad findings are:

- While the figures are quite approximate it is clear that in Asia and Latin America the numbers of girls attending school has risen
- While UPE exists now in most African countries their figures have improved less, though there is huge variation across Africa of course (as in all continents)

# Girls in tertiary education

- In many parts of the world girls have achieved well at tertiary education and now outnumber boys
- e.g. in Europe/US since 1980s, in Latin America in 1990s, more recently in Central America
- Education levels overall are rising over recent years. Only exceptions are SE Asia and Africa

# In spite of rises in education

Women have not found it easy to access senior jobs in the public or private sectors, in the global north and global south the available data show that increased education has not resulted in senior positions for the majority of women

# Why is this?

- It could be a delay between more women getting educated and finding work
- It could be they did the wrong subjects

BUT THE DATA ,ALTHOUGH WEAK, DO NOT SUPPORT THESE IDEAS

**There are other strong factors at work** and it is these that the research in the 3 countries has focused on, to tease out from the broad generalisations the specifics for women in each country context, because of course there are huge variations across each continent in terms of GDP, education, HDI and how women fare in getting senior jobs

# While women are known to be important to the economy

“despite evidence regarding the importance of women’s economic integration ...country level data show us clearly that there are still discrepancies between the job opportunities and wages available to women and those of their male counterparts”. (Zahidi and Ibarra, 2010: Preface, pv)

# The policy and legislative context

- There have been many shifts in thinking and policies towards women, gender mainstreaming in recent years
- A plethora of policies promoting gender equality
- Often worded in similar ways across the world, implying the role of external and donor 'expects' in shaping these

# Yet experience shows

- In spite of good progress on integrating gender issues into policies
- And good policies to promote women in different parts of the society and economy
- Few resources are available and there is limited political will for implementation
- Progress and change is slow
- There are some exceptions of course

# These policies have often been developed

...Without the involvement of women themselves

- Jargon is often opaque
- It is easy to become confused by the wording
- There is a lack of real ownership
- Lack of accountability systems



# The review of the global data

Has confirmed many of the findings in the global literature. In spite of steady rises in girls education in most countries and gender policies and machineries barriers for women accessing senior management jobs in the global south remain: these are based on e.g. social attitudes, norms and socialisation for male and female roles and responsibilities, structural issues, female concerns about managing male environments, lack of access for women to the best pathways into employment

# The data also highlighted

- The need for far more serious qualitative research to understand the issues in different contexts and the key role of e.g. religion, geography, class, ethnicity as well as gender in accessing education and subsequent employment
- The need for better analysis of existing statistics; for much more sex (and other factors) disaggregation
- The need to understand the specific challenges in different contexts of changing attitudes and behaviour around issues of gender equality

# Other issues emerging from the overview

- The importance of understanding differences between countries that neighbour each other, where the results of improved education and similar gender policies sometimes have different outcomes for women
- The need to draw out the specific challenges and blocks in each country, rooted in their own history, culture and current social and economic status

# The literature also highlights the importance of women's strategies

Women are actors and not passive in the story. Some women are finding strategies to address the situation they find:

- Finding mentors
- Seeking ways to manage domestic and work responsibilities in new ways
- Networking and supporting each other
- Seeking training
- Addressing the need for changing roles within households
- Asking for quotas, critical mass of women in positions of power
- Finding their voice in different forums