

# Strategies for promoting leadership pathways for female Australia Awards alumni in Vietnam



## Key Findings

20 June 2015, Hanoi



# 2014 Tracer Study: Gender Gaps

**50%**

Male alumni were almost **50% more likely** than female to be in a management position.

**41%**

Women had been promoted at work upon return from study in Australia, as compared with **52% of men**.

**20%**

Women returned to a higher position, as compared with **29% of men**.



## Study objectives:

- a) To identify key **enablers and barriers** to professional leadership faced by Vietnamese women; and
- b) To identify **feasible strategies** to enhance the enabling environment for returned female alumni.

*‘The best way to promote a woman is to promote a woman.’ Female alumna*



# Analytical Framework





## Data collection methods & respondents:

Phases	Method	Respondents
Phase 1	Key informant interviews	12 women, 1 man
Phase 2	Survey Monkey Questionnaire	506 female alumni
		176 male alumni
Phase 3	Semi-structured interviews: individual	16 women
		2 men
	Semi-structured interviews: group	1 x Hanoi (3 women) 2 x HCMC (5 women, 2 men)
TOTALS	Totals interviewed (KII + SSI)	34 women, 5 men
	Totals surveyed	506 women, 176 men



## General responses: Views on the study topic

- Topic was praised and challenged
- Senior leadership = limited positions, and so only a few benefit
- Career fulfilment / work-life balance more important to many
- Technical leaders in their field, not necessarily seeking seniority
- Social priority of family meant some women had not ever contemplated leadership
- **39.8 % of the 502 female alumni surveyed said they intend to apply for a senior position in the future**





## General responses: Type of organisation matters

- Promotion to senior levels difficult for women in public sector
- Visibility with boss is paramount in public sector
- Women in private sector, especially multi-national companies and NGOs did not perceive strong barriers
- International HR systems in companies and NGOs cited as a factor in the equal opportunity culture

*‘Because we cannot go out for drinking, we do not have a strong relationship with any leader or we have no one to support us for a higher position, while those who do get promoted. This is really a problem, not only with the system but because it discourages many of us from devoting our lives for a better society.’*



National policies  
and gender  
expectations

## Alumni responses: top enablers & barriers

### Enablers:

- Paid maternity leave
- Support for women's higher educational attainment

### Barriers:

- Pervasive norm that women's primary role is to raise a family
- Perception that only men make good leaders
- Earlier retirement age for women, with lower eligibility age for overseas training, short course training, appointments

*'Women in Australia worry about when is the best time in their career to have kids; women in Vietnam worry about the effect of their career on their family.'*



Workplace  
factors

## Alumni responses: top enablers & barriers

### Enablers:

- Good relationship with boss
- Supervisor is supportive of women's career development
- Presence of other female role models in leadership

### Barriers:

- Women have less time and access to networking and information
- Inflexible working hours, incompatible with family duties
- Men have more access to informal socialising with supervisors





Household  
and  
personal  
factors

## Alumni responses: top enablers & barriers

### Enablers:

- Self confidence, and mindset open to career advancement
- Support from spouse, parents/in-law to pursue career

### Barriers:

- Husband not involved in child care
- Women's concern about family 'failure' if pursue career
- Lack of confidence in professional knowledge

*'What hinders women the most is the inequality in the perception of women's roles in the family. If we find ways to **make women more confident in their marriages**, and men more respectful and understanding, it could be better.'*



# The challenge for DFAT:

Activities that have  
the best chance of  
success given the  
traditions at home  
and workplace ?





## Alumni responses: top recommendations for DFAT

Offer short course modules on gender equitable leadership as part of leadership courses for male and female alumni

Engage leaders within organisations in supporting women's career development planning; review workplace HR policies

Support organisations to review workplace HR policies to be gender equitable

Information seminars on technical / professional topics upon return to Vietnam

Involvement of male co-workers, husbands, supervisors of female alumni in pre-departure and return profiling events

Female alumni job website for senior positions



## Alumni responses: top recommendations for DFAT

'Inspirational women' networking events in Australia and Vietnam with senior professional women (business, academia, government)

Profile senior Vietnamese professional women in the media

'Sandwich' Phds with less time needed in Australia, or more assistance for women with young children

Partnership potential with UNDP-Cambridge Women's Leadership and Mentoring Program

Consider support to Women in Politics and Public Administration (WiPPA) at the HCM National Academy



*“I received an outstanding award for my thesis, but I could not tell my boss because he would think I was showing off.”*

*Supporting women to be able to convey their skills and achievements is a priority for assisting their promotion.”*

*“Changing Vietnamese women's own perception of gender equity both at home and at work is very important. All of the suggestions (in the survey monkey) are great, but they won't be very effective until women themselves see the need to promote and advance themselves.”*



# Thank you



Photos were by alumni: Tran Thi Thanh Huong, Au Thi Nguyet Lien,  
Le Thi Lan Phuong, and Tran Hoang Yen.