African Queen
Mamphela Ramphele on opening doors for women public sector leaders around the world

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Tour of duty
Blazing a trail in Australia
Uschi Schreiber
Global Government & Public Sector Leader
@uschischreiber
Welcome to this edition of Citizen Today, EY’s magazine for our government and public sector clients around the world. This edition is devoted to a single subject: the role of women leaders in parliamentary systems and at the head of government departments.

Who leads the public sector is important – now more than ever. Governments are dealing with some of the most complex issues ever faced – from the economy to climate change, from aging populations to job creation and from mass urbanization to food security – solutions do not come easily. Diversity of thought, experience and perspective is needed to respond to these challenges. The question is: do we have enough diversity at leadership levels in our parliaments and at the top of our Government departments today?

EY recently developed an index that looks at the representation of women in leadership roles in the G20 countries. Women make up 51% of the population, and in Canada, the No.1 ranked country on our index, they account for 45% of its public sector leaders. However, our lead article “EY’s Worldwide Index of Women as Public Sector Leaders” clearly shows that most countries do not come near this kind of representation of women despite many years of legislation and supporting policy.

Having looked at the numbers via the Index, we now use this edition of Citizen Today to speak to women public sector leaders themselves.

Meet chief ministers and ministers, heads of government departments, the founder of a new political party and even a former police commissioner – all of them women who have defied the odds and who are passionate about their roles as policy-makers and change agents. Many of these women leaders come from emerging markets. Theirs are stories that capture the challenges faced and lessons learned by women leaders in government around the world. They also demonstrate that a more diverse future is being built today.

You can access this edition by downloading our app to your compatible mobile devices. I also invite you to join us at www.ey.com/government/womenleaders to be inspired by the lives and ideas of some public sector women leaders who have joined EY in this global initiative.

As always, I look forward to hearing your views on this edition of Citizen Today. Please contact me at uschi.schreiber@hk.ey.com.
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Governments around the world are striving to promote more women into their leadership ranks. But the mixed results achieved to date are a testament to the numerous difficulties inherent in such a task. EY’s Worldwide Index of Women as Public Sector Leaders analyzes women’s representation in public sector leadership positions across G20 countries. It is intended to stimulate a global conversation about the policies, measures and role models that are needed to promote and retain the female talent that abounds in the public sector.
The average voter will likely not know, or perhaps even care, much about the gender distribution of their local or central governments. With many developed countries beset by falling living standards and contracting economies, and even rapid-growth economies facing their own set of unique challenges, there is always much else for the voter and policy-maker to focus on.

But who leads the public sector is important. On a local level, elected councilors and paid officials oversee public services, and on a national level, sector leaders in the 21st century are also dealing with complex, long-term, systemic issues such as urbanization, globalization, aging populations, health care and climate change.

Effective responses demand diverse perspectives to these challenges. Most governments are aware of the benefits of promoting a more balanced gender mix in their leadership ranks and are actively advancing policies to address the gender deficit. Unfortunately, as in other sectors, the gender distribution across their leadership roles is not representative of the number of women in the community and in higher education.

EY’s Worldwide Index of Women as Public Sector Leaders is intended to stimulate a global conversation about the policies, measures and role models that are needed to promote and retain the female talent that abounds in the public sector. Our Index highlights issues of gender equity at senior leadership levels in the public sector across the globe, beginning with an analysis of women’s representation in leadership positions across G20 countries.

Survey results
Women make up 51% of the population. But EY’s survey shows that only four G20 countries reached even a third of representation of women in leadership roles, despite women constituting a significant part of the overall public sector workforce in many countries.

Even in Canada, which ranked No.1 in our Index, women account for only 45% of its public sector leaders. No other country comes close to this figure, with the numbers of female leaders in the following six countries in the Index hovering at around a third. In Japan, the world’s third-largest economy, women account for 2.5% of public sector leaders. In India, the world’s largest democracy, only 7.7% of public sector leaders are female. In Saudi Arabia, the figure is zero. Such results underline the scale of the task ahead.

Canada, Australia and South Africa, all of which score well, have some form of gender equality legislation in place. This may explain why their results are more consistent across all the indicators. In the UK, the percentage of female public sector leaders is higher than the percentage of female ministers, for example.

However, legislation does not offer all the answers. New laws and requirements have succeeded in getting more women into the workforce, but looking beyond the statute book, it is pertinent to ask whether such legislation has enabled more women to take up leadership positions. The facts, regrettably, suggest not. In Saudi Arabia for instance, only 2% of women who applied received a mortgage, despite a law to the contrary.

Why is it that 40 years after commencing serious work on gender equality there is still only limited progress? For many years, there was an assumption that it was clear what needed to be done – change the law and improve women’s access to education and soon women everywhere would be doing everything and attitudes would change. Of course there has been a lot of change over the last 20 to 40 years – but not as much as one might have expected at leadership levels. To address what appear to be systemic, deep-rooted problems, we need to look at actions and solutions that can be deployed in addition to the laws passed by our elected representatives.

So what can be done?
EY has identified four streams of action, which when taken together seem to lead to greater representation of women in leadership roles. These are:

1. Legislation to address visible barriers
Research from Carleton University, Canada, suggests that legislation and political reform can reverse women’s under-representation. The researchers found that countries with “first past the post” electoral systems, without quotas, will not reach a level of 40% legislative participation by women until near the end of the 21st century. But in the 26 countries they studied that met or surpassed a target of 30%, 21 have some form of proportional representation, and 13 of the 26 use either quotas or have reserved seats for women.
### Legislation

Legislation is also important to deal with equal employment opportunity, address open discrimination, safeguard maternity leave and ensure other protections of women in the workforce. Importantly, legislation and policy can assist in making better meritorious recruitment decisions. However, experience also shows that less visible factors impact women's progression into senior leadership roles.

### 2. Cultural transformation to address invisible barriers

Evidence continues to mount for the power and pervasive nature of unconscious bias, in both men and women. In a 2012 Yale University study researchers asked 127 scientists at six universities to review identical applications for a lab manager position — with the resumes randomly assigned male or female names. The researchers found that staff consistently judged male candidates to be more competent and deserving of an extra US$4,000 pay on average. They were also more willing to provide male applicants with mentoring and were more likely to hire them. Notably, women in the study were just as likely as men to make these judgments — even scientists, those guardians of objectivity, responded no better than control groups.

Leaders, therefore, need to send a consistent message in support of achieving greater equality at senior levels. Part of the solution is to embed accountability into the performance targets of every leader, but it is also crucial to lead by example and address

### Canadian case study

Canada tops our Index, with women in 45% of its public sector leadership positions. Janice Charette, the country's Deputy Clerk of the Privy Council, notes that women leaders are a “huge asset” to Canada's public sector. “One of the wonderful effects of this progress is that younger public servants now have positive role models — male and female — that can inspire them in developing their own leadership styles and encourage them to aspire to ... senior roles,” she says.

She believes that Canada's dual-language status and the historical importance of immigration to the country mean an inclusive approach to running its public services is essential. “The ability to understand — whether it's gender, whether it's regional diversity, whether it's diversity in terms of ethnic background — goes to the heart of understanding the changing nature of the country.”

Learn more at: [www.guardian.co.uk/public-leaders-network/](http://www.guardian.co.uk/public-leaders-network/)
inappropriate behaviors and attitudes that undermine the goal of gender equity. Importantly, they need to be open about the fact that unconscious bias impacts recruitment, promotion and other decision-making—they need to discuss it, understand its impact, measure it, and put in place systems and processes to minimize it. In this context, there is a need to continuously improve public sector recruitment practices and departmental cultures, entrenching respect for diversity.

3. Role models and leadership
Attention needs to be paid on how policies and legislation get implemented in practice. For example, promotional policies might be well written and intended, but the following questions should be asked to determine a department’s practice:

- Does everyone have the opportunity to progress, even if they work part time?
- Is progress against gender and other diversity targets measured in a meaningful way, or is it merely a routine compliance exercise without efforts being actively refocused when progress has stalled?

Nancy Pelosi, the Democratic Leader of the US House of Representatives, has served her district in San Francisco for more than 25 years but shows no sign of slowing down. “If we want our economy to flourish and grow, we must lift up women in our economy,” Pelosi said, when announcing that she would continue as leader of the Democratic caucus in November 2012. “Women in the academic world, women in health care. Any subject you can name is more wholesome, more successful, more efficient with the involvement of women.” This example underlines why it is important that decision-makers take a long-term view of an employee’s potential contribution, and support the re-entry of employees after maternity leave to better retain high-quality employees for the longer term.

4. Actions for future women public sector leaders
EY teams have spoken to many women in the public sector and other leadership roles over recent months. Most women public sector leaders had advice for the generations coming after them. As a result of our conversations we compiled the following list. While it is not complete or objective, the following suggestions represent the combined wisdom of public sector leaders from many countries and give guidance to aspiring women leaders around the world:

- **Have a go** – put your hand up. Assume you can do it. Let others know that you are ambitious.
- **Be assertive** – understand the options available to you and never be afraid to speak up for yourself.
- **Learn to negotiate effectively** – your manager is not a mind reader. They will not offer you the right role and coach you into leadership positions unless you can articulate what it is that you want.
- **Tell your employer what you want** – be really clear about the type of role that will work for you at this point in your life and the role you aspire to in the future.
- **Play the long game** – accept it’s ok if your career takes a back seat while you start a family. Your career is often 30 years long. In the grand scheme of things, what happens for a sixth of that time is not that important.
- **Respect that flexibility goes both ways** – be flexible where and when you can to support your team and your organization.
- **Agitate for change** – as women leaders, public sector employees and board members gender equity is not only a social justice issue, it improves productivity, engagement and decision-making.
- **Ask for advice** – it’s ok not to have all the answers. Talk to people about their experiences. Whenever you meet someone new, ask yourself: what can I learn from this person?

We invite you to join us at [www.ey.com/government/womenleaders](http://www.ey.com/government/womenleaders) where you can download our full report and be inspired by the lives and ideas of some public sector women leaders who have joined EY in this global initiative.

Working for women around the world

Governments around the world are facing up to rapid change. Shifting demographics, urbanization and climate change, as well as the lingering effects of the financial crisis, demand great leaders at the decision-making table. With one billion women expected to join the workforce, start businesses and take up leadership positions over the next decade, women are now seen as the next big emerging market — and one that governments around the world need to take account of. EY is assisting governments to actively advance policies that address the gender deficit. Here are some examples of our work, together with a selection of our ideas on how governments and businesses around the world can create new opportunities for women.

In their own words: women in leadership
Find out more about the women leading by example. We speak to some of Australia’s successful and inspirational business women who have made a difference in their chosen fields and in their communities.

Women: the next emerging market
Over the next decade, women will wield enormous influence over politics, business and society. This report explores the many ways EY is helping to economically empower women.

Gender baseline data collection project
The mission of the International Finance Corporation (IFC) is to foster sustainable private sector growth in the developing countries. As part of its mission, it supports the participation of women in business. The IFC is conducting a study on the financial behavior and performance of women-owned small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and plans to highlight the gaps in access to finance for this segment across 32 developing countries.

The overall objective of the project is to increase the access to finance to women-owned SMEs in the developing countries through the IFC’s efforts to scale up its operations and partner with financial institutions. The IFC is also aiming to provide advisory services to financial institutions and women entrepreneurs in order to reduce the gender-based barriers in the business environment.

The IFC has engaged EY to analyze and prepare a report of the survey and make recommendations. It included estimation of the market size and demand for credit by women-owned SMEs, conducting a baseline estimate of loans to women-owned SME, data analysis and data extrapolation.

Women of Africa: a powerful untapped economic force for the continent
African women’s under-representation must be addressed if Africa is to leverage fully its promise and potential.

The new global mindset: driving innovation through diverse perspectives
The new rules of leadership await codification. But sifting through available trends and studies, we find certain themes repeatedly emerging.
Paradigm shift: building a new talent model to boost growth

Businesses are on the brink of a talent crisis. Only a major shift in thinking can help tackle the global talent shortfall.

Leading across borders: inclusive thinking in an interconnected world

Through new research we conducted with the Economist Intelligence Unit and interviews with leading thinkers and heads of global corporations, this report highlights three actions – think, learn and act differently.

Scaling up: why women-owned businesses can recharge the global economy

Women entrepreneurs own or operate up to one-third of all private companies around the globe. Get a fresh look at the productive potential of women in this special report.

Monitoring and evaluation of UN anti-human trafficking program

The United Nations women’s anti-human trafficking program seeks to reduce the number of internally trafficked women and children in India. It aims to achieve this through a strengthening of governmental protection and prevention mechanisms that focus on source areas and through community action and participation.

Specific targets include supporting processes that stir the communities to be more vigilant to the risks of trafficking and create sustainable livelihood options for women and girls living in areas vulnerable to trafficking. In addition, the program aims to strengthen civil registration systems and to lease out common property resources to self-help groups of young women to generate substantial incomes. There are also plans to promote convergence of government programs and use existing government resources to create Centers of Action to prevent trafficking in the source areas.

EY’s monitoring and evaluation services include collecting all baseline data indicators, a mid-term evaluation (approximately 1.5 years after project implementation) and a final program evaluation after the completion of the project.

Scoping study for SME finance for women in Nepal

By increasing access to financial services, the IFC aims to create opportunities and improve lives. Access to financial services facilitates the growth of SMEs by helping improve their access to finance through a supportive financial infrastructure, financial products development and strengthening of financial institutions; providing quality business services toward strengthening value chains; and helping businesses adapt to the impacts of climate change. With a strong presence in Bangladesh, Bhutan, Northeast India and Nepal, the IFC is conducting a scoping study for SME finance for women in Nepal.

EY is assisting this project by gathering data on women SME sectors and geographical distribution in Nepal. Based on this data, our teams will be estimating the size of the women SME market and conduct market segmentation to better understand the needs of women owned SMEs at different levels, distinct from women entrepreneurs. We will also analyze how much of this market is being served to establish the supply gap that exists, and analyze the existing real and perceived barriers for women entrepreneurs and how these can be overcome to promote SME finance for women.

Stories of ambition and change

Over the following pages we meet some extraordinary women leaders from around the world. Having considered the quantitative results of the EY Index, we decided to speak to women in government and public sector leadership roles themselves. Theirs are stories of ambitions pursued, challenges overcome and more work still to be done. As well as meeting a woman who has led a police service – still a rarity globally – many of the women we speak to work in countries with emerging economies. Although the EY Index demonstrates there are often only but a few women in public sector leadership roles, the women we meet from India, Brazil, Turkey and South Africa prove that women are leading – and succeeding – even in the most challenging of environments. Importantly, they are making a difference – as leaders and decision-makers and as role models for a younger group of aspiring women leaders.
Dr. Mamphela Ramphele is a woman on a mission. A lifelong anti-apartheid activist, she has stints in health care, academia and the World Bank Group on her CV. Now focusing on the formation of her new political party, she explains why a revolution is needed to genuinely address the gender divide.

A revolution on the radar

Dr. Mamphela Ramphele is a medical doctor and former Vice Chancellor of the University of Cape Town and Managing Director of The World Bank Group. She recently announced the formation of a new political party, “Agang,” meaning “to build” in the language of the Sotho community, that will contest South Africa’s next elections.

This article is drawn from remarks made during an EY Women Public Sector Leaders event in Cape Town, March 2013.
Public services tend to reflect the way in which a society is structured, and we, as South Africans, should have pride in having a government and a constitution that has tackled the issue of equality head on. It is built into our policies, it is built into the targets that the public and private sectors have to meet, and this is fantastic. But things aren't improving everywhere.

For example, how do we explain the fact that gender-based violence in our society has never been higher? If, as leaders, we don't ask that question, then we are failing in our leadership.

“We won’t just get up in the morning to find we are in a gender equal society; we have to acknowledge that there is still work to be done.”

Partly this is down to gender stereotypes, and this is a global phenomenon. There is a mindset about the role and place of women, which means that we can have 45% of women in public leadership but still when we talk of a leader what springs to mind is a man. And, of course, whether you’re at the G20 or the G7 they are often dominated by men in gray and dark suits.

Getting down to hard work

We have embraced very deep down the idea that men must do certain things and women must do other things, which is why we are supposed to be so grateful when he is prepared to babysit his own child, for example. But we won’t just get up in the morning to find we are in a gender equal society; we have to acknowledge that there is still work to be done.

We have to accept that in any change situation, those who stand to benefit from change have to be prepared to do their hardest work. Look at our struggle for freedom in South Africa. Nelson Mandela reminded us, even in the negotiation process, those who stand to benefit from the fruits of labor might have to give a bit more, compromise a little more, because the gains are so huge.

If we had waited for both black and white people to be equally concerned, and therefore equally committed, it wouldn’t have happened. Women have to be the ones driving the strategy and the execution of the change process. We mustn’t wait for men to suddenly put themselves in a position where all those benefits they are getting are shared. It’s not that they are bad people. It’s a journey, and something has to be triggered in their mindset to really embrace gender equality.

“Solidarity among women is absolutely vital. Unfortunately, this has receded in recent years.”

Another important point – and this is something that my generation of women understands very clearly – is that solidarity among women is absolutely vital. Unfortunately, this has receded in recent years. It wasn’t a one-size-fits-all kind of feminism, but we have allowed a male-dominated framing of the issue to emerge. This means it is now seen as elitist, as foreign, and you are made to feel there is something wrong with women talking about what they can collectively do to change the system.

The case for change

Part of the problem is that we lack a compelling business reason for a greater number of women leaders – we need to be able to say something like, “Unless we have women going to Nigeria, we don’t get different business.” Take the example of Scandinavian countries. The environment of equality they have created has helped lead to better health outcomes, better economies and better life expectations. We need in-depth numbers to help make a compelling argument.

And finally, we have to confront the resurgence of traditionalism around the world, which is used by some to justify brutality and the pervasiveness of gender-based violence. How do we make sure that we do not give permission to anybody to violate someone in the name of tradition, and that young men don’t have to feel ashamed about being associated with men who don’t do that?

We have not had our voices heard about this resurgence of traditionalism to justify the unjustifiable. We need to challenge traditionalism, challenge the assumption that to be a man you have to rape, to be a man you have got to dominate, and we need to find ways of building this into our strategy and our agenda for change.

Revolution in the air

So what is that agenda for change? We really need a revolution. Without one, we are going to continue to see children being raped by their fathers, uncles and brothers; grandmothers being raped by their grandsons; and so on. It’s a revolutionary change that is needed, and that is the mindset required. The number one part of the revolution is that we need to talk about the outrages that are happening in our families, in our communities, in our places of worship, in our workplaces and in the public space.

“It’s a revolutionary change that is needed, and that is the mindset required.”

I remember traveling with a young woman on a plane and she said, “Mama you have no idea,” and she told me about when she arrived in our Parliament as a young woman representative and someone grabbed her breast. She ran to the senior person to report this, and he responded “Oh my child, I wish it were me.” And this in a country with gender equality and something has to be triggered in their mindset to really embrace gender equality.

We have embraced very deep down the idea that men must do certain things and women must do other things, which is why we are supposed to be so grateful when he is prepared to babysit his own child, for example. But we won’t just get up in the morning to find we are in a gender equal society; we have to acknowledge that there is still work to be done.
Few women in India have risen as high as Sheila Dikshit. Three-time-elected Chief Minister of Delhi, she took time out of her busy schedule to tell Satish Kaushal about her role and what needs to be done to enable more women to follow in her footsteps.

Delhi, Capital of India and vibrant melting pot of the historic and the new. A city of contrasts, rising population and dynamism that has, since 1998, been overseen by Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit, now well into her record-breaking third term in office. Under her leadership, hers has been a city transformed. From higher environmental standards; investments in power, transport and infrastructure; and a deep and abiding commitment to democratization and transparency, it is little wonder that she is widely seen as a role model across the country. And she is confident that India’s long-term commitment to equality will help ensure that many women will be able to participate at the top table in the years to come.

“The Constitution of India has always provided equal rights to both men and women,” she says. “Education has been a great enabler in the development and empowerment of women – especially young girls – and it is helping women to come out of their closets and take part in changing India by entering fields like civil services and the corporate sector.” She explains that Indian women are rapidly proving themselves across many diverse sectors.

“Breaking the shackles of gender inequality, the women of India have proved their mettle in fields of administration, sports as well as the private sector because of their sheer competence and hard work,” she says. “India is poised for a leadership role in the next 25 years. This can happen only if more and more women join the civil services as they would be trained for an inclusive growth, in which women will play a pivotal, substantiate and a contributory role. Only then can inclusive growth happen in this country.”
A lifetime in the arena

She is speaking from a position of both experience and authority. Chief Minister Dikshit has long championed the cause of women throughout her career. For example, in the early 1970s, she was Chairperson of the Young Women's Association and was instrumental in setting up two of the most successful hostels for working women in Delhi. She also represented India on the UN Commission on Status of Women between 1984 and 1989 and, in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, she along with her 82 colleagues were jailed in August 1990 for 23 days when she led a people's movement against the atrocities being committed on women.

As Chief Minister she launched the “Stree Shakti” program, which entails capacity building among women by providing them frequent access to health care and medicine, training in different employment generation streams and financial aid for self-employment opportunities. In addition, Gender Resource Centers have also been set up in different parts of the city to enhance and encourage entrepreneurship among women. The Delhi Government also created the Department of Women and Child Development in 2007 and is currently running an array of programs that focus on women empowerment. But that's not all.

“To help women take positions of leadership, we have increased the proportion of women from 33% to 50% in the municipal elections,” Dikshit says. “In our Delhi Ladli scheme, we give INR100,000 (US$1,840) to girls who are registered with us at birth, and then we cover all her educational milestones till she turns 18. However, I do understand that to empower women, we will not be able to achieve our objective by merely launching schemes. It is the mindset and the thought process that needs to be changed, which is a slow and continuous struggle.”

Indeed, there is little doubt that Indian women seeking to work and progress in the country’s public services continue to face substantial barriers to advancement. “Since the beginning of our civilization, women have always been considered as a weaker sex, capable of doing only household chores and taking care of the families,” points out the Chief Minister. “However, with women taking up positions of responsibilities, the mindset is slowly changing, though the acceptance of women in these positions has not been automatic and immediate.”

It transpires that many of these barriers are deep-rooted. “Sometimes, women are apprehensive about getting into politics as it is considered to be a bad profession,” she continues. “In many cases, even their families don’t permit them to get into politics. In this world, women have reached varied heights. In countries like Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and even India, women have got various opportunities and they have made it to the top, like Indira Gandhi. Politics is not a school which evaluates you on a defined ground or helps in career setting; therefore, the challenge is even tougher.”

The competition for places is also very intense, a sign, perhaps, of both India’s demographic shifts and the increasing realization that a career in India’s Government has much to offer the country’s youth – both male and female. “Taking up administrative services or politics demands a lot of commitment, honesty and determination,” says the Chief Minister. “An average 400,000 to 500,000 candidates appear for the civil services examination every year, where aspirants are required to complete a three-stage process, with a final success rate of about 0.3% of the total applicants.”

Looking to the future

Recent events in Delhi and elsewhere in India have shown that substantial challenges remain. With violence against women on the rise, and as the global media spotlight intensifies, the Chief Minister is very much aware there remains much work to be done. “It is very unfortunate and makes me feel miserable, particularly as a woman Chief Minister when we come across such incidents in the state,” she admits. “One reason for this scenario is that Delhi is a large state with a mix of people from different origins, cultures, religions, tastes and preferences. Another is the lack of responsibility and capability of our police force. Our police force needs to be trained in assisting women's needs in a cosmopolitan city like ours and not just looking after the law and order.”

With this in mind, the local police force is undergoing reforms in order to be more accessible to women in need of their help. “We are trying to bring them together and train them on improving their communication and people management skills,” she says. “What to speak and how to respond in certain situations is vital for our police force, especially in cases involving women.”

But despite these problems, the Chief Minister remains optimistic and supportive of persuading even more women to enter government ranks. “Given a choice, I would definitely encourage children to come up and be a part of the civil services,” she says. “The civil services have become much more important in the recent times with the interface between people and the Government becoming much more interesting and challenging.

“In Delhi, we have started the ‘Bhagidari System,’ which is an initiative of the Delhi Government to promote broad-based civic participation in local governance, and it has been made the root for all other development and welfare schemes. This program has been recognized by the United Nations and has been replicated and implemented by various other states of India through their various welfare schemes. The successful implementation of this program requires the ability to understand public needs, a high degree of innovation and willingness to adopt a problem-solving approach, which demands more and more young people to come forward and take the charge.”

Such projects – challenging, interesting and with the end result of enhanced service delivery to Delhi’s citizens – help explain the enduring attractiveness of government service to India’s best and brightest. And thanks to the leadership and successes of Chief Minister Dikshit, the door has been opened to more women serving in the future. ~

Satish Kaushal is Executive Director, Government Services, at EY India. satish.kaushal@in.ey.com

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In 2001, Christine Nixon made history by becoming Australia’s first female police commissioner. Now retired from the force, she tells Uschi Schreiber about her long career in the police force and the reality of life as top cop in the state of Victoria.

Christine Nixon has never been one to take a backward step. Her innate self-confidence, twinned with a strong sense of curiosity and determination to make the most of her abilities, put her in good stead during what was a meteoric career in the male-dominated Australian police force, including eight years as Chief Police Commissioner for the state of Victoria. On taking up this role she became the first Australian woman to serve at this rank, 85 years after the appointment of the country’s first woman police officer.

“There were only 130 women when I joined the police and 8,000 men,” she recalls. “I was 19 years old and had just read The Female Eunuch, and I was at that phase of the feminist movement. I think I benefited from the government of the time, which was pushing for women to be there. I also came from a policing family (Nixon’s father and brother were police officers), and so policing wasn’t foreign to me at all. Having grown up with it, I knew very senior people and I knew very experienced people. That helped too.”

But the 1970s was hardly an environment that actively encouraged and enabled women to progress through the ranks. Maternity leave and other measures to boost flexible working were yet to be made available and structural barriers – such as the height of eligible recruits – made things harder still. “Equalities legislation was just coming into play,” says Nixon, “and the new laws were important, but there were still a lot of barriers. This meant that very few women were eligible to join and the field was pretty narrow. In terms of policing that was something that had to be addressed.”
In conversation | Force of nature

Christine Nixon, right front
Legislation matters — to a point

Nixon joined the New South Wales (NSW) Police Force in 1972 and rose to the rank of Assistant Commissioner. This period, which was broken only by two years’ study at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government where she attained a Master of Public Administration, saw her steadily rise the career ladder, encountering obstacles man-made and otherwise along the way. It was her experiences as an officer that shaped much of her agenda as Victoria’s Police Commissioner, a role that saw her responsible for 12,800 personnel, including 9,700 sworn officers, in a state with a population of 4.6 million.

“’In Victoria I was always trying to lift away barriers or remove those that others had tried to put back in,” she says. “I think you have to get a sufficient volume of women into an organization like the police, and this meant we were always aiming to get 40% of applicants to be women, in order to get that critical mass. Legislation set the right conditions, but it doesn’t remove all the barriers along the way, some of which are more visible than others.”

Such barriers ranged from physical obstructions to entry, such as an obstacle course test, to old-fashioned attitudes and the composition of interview panels for recruitment. “In NSW when I managed to change the system and make it more egalitarian and less focused on a small panel making choices, I noticed quite a change in the number of women who were able to get through,” she recalls. “The law helps but it does need a strong force within to drive it from the inside.” These changes, implemented when Nixon was responsible for human resources in the 1990s, also saw new measures such as an advertising campaign launched to attract women, particularly in schools. Nixon also sought to support a women’s network, which involved women police officers meeting biannually to focus on projects such as maternity leave systems and child care.

The barriers she and her fellow women officers encountered, she believes, were the result of an entrenched and deep-rooted bias that is not as accidental as some might like to believe. “When you look at the bigger picture around women in the public service, it is not necessarily ‘unconscious’ bias,” she says. “I think they know. And it does require a constant knowledge and vigilance over the systems, processes and organizational mindsets to make sure we don’t slip back.”

Leadership lessons

Nixon was appointed Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police in 2001. She joined a police force huge in size and power, but one that failed to reflect the diversity of the communities it served. Attracting people from different ethnic minorities was obviously a part of the solution, but recruiting more women formed a key part of the new approach. “When I joined in 2001, I think they had about 16% of sworn officers as female,” she says. “Many of them had been serving for quite some time, but they really hadn’t progressed through to the higher levels. I set a target of 25% to be female. The union opposed me, but in doing that, in some ways they gave me more publicity. We also did some positive advertising showing women in charge of police situations, and this campaign drove up the numbers of women applying and getting into the organization.”

This determination and refusal to back down was a core aspect of her approach to being a strong and effective leader. “I wasn’t just after their hearts and minds,” she says. “Sometimes, you just have to say ‘this is what we are doing and this is where are going.’ I then made sure I held people accountable for delivery,
irrespective of what the courts or union said we couldn’t do. And we made some good progress – there are now senior women in Victoria’s police force who have children, and they are particularly good role models.”

Such role models, she believes, are crucial for maintaining forward momentum. “Part of this whole thing is about the women themselves,” she says. “What we had to do with policing is convince women they could actually do it and be confident to do it well. This was easier when I was Chief Commissioner, as they see other women in senior positions. The more they see women doing these types of jobs, the more they will be convinced that they have the capacity to do it.”

**Sustainability strategies**

Nixon left the police force in 2009 to chair the Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority, an organization created to rebuild communities following Victoria’s bushfires of 2009. Now employed in a variety of roles across the public and private sectors, she is a close observer of her former colleagues in uniform. Asked whether the changes she introduced have proved to be sustainable, she says that so much depends on senior people having a strong focus on making sure the reforms do not go into reverse.

“Watching NSW from afar, the number of women getting into senior positions is in fact slipping back,” she admits. “This is because of the kind of systems they are using to choose who are in these senior positions and the people making those choices. One of the things that sustains the kind of changes introduced in my time are the systems that are put in place. Previously, there were panels with external people, many of whom were trained interviewers, but now it has gone back to the old ways.”

Given that most governments have had, for some years now, a version of meritocratic appointments and recruitment in order to minimize bias and to have clearer transparency around the recruitment process, it seems pertinent to ask what the rationale is for just using internal interviewers. It is clear Nixon is frustrated. “I used to have panels for all of my senior appointments that were made up of people from business and elsewhere they were our ‘stakeholders,’” she says.

“There was a requirement for a woman to be on most selection panels but the more senior you got, particularly in government, you ran out of time to be on some of them as there were so many and not enough senior women to be on them. We ended up paying women who were qualified to sit on these panels – a group of about 15 with multi-faith and multicultural backgrounds who were very happy to be on these panels. You need to make it mandatory to have this diversity. The difference you get when panels are diverse – you get a much better result.”

Nixon is more encouraged by the fact that more women are serving for a longer time in uniform – particularly as longevity of service is a key factor to promotions. “There is a natural time it takes before you get to a position in policing when you can then be eligible for taking on a more senior role,” she says. “You really need a minimum of 15 to 20 years to be eligible to be considered for more senior roles in a reasonably sized police force. The experience gained in this time means they are in a better place to perform well in front of the panels that decide promotion.”

**Looking back**

Nixon’s passion for policing, evident throughout the course of this conversation, also saw her through some tough times in the service, particularly toward the end of her time as Commissioner, when media opponents grew ever more vocal. Recalling those difficult days, she says that while part of it was due to the nature of her role in the public eye, the fact she was a woman was also undoubtedly a factor.

“There are so few women in senior positions that are public,” she says. “There may be women in charge of government departments but there aren’t many who have a public profile. In some cases I was treated well, but after about five years things started to change, and I think that was about a change in editorial policy. Senior women are held at a higher standard and receive a much more detailed analysis of what they do or don’t do. So it’s something you have to toughen up over – and don’t hand yourself over to the critics.”

This ability to persevere was perhaps one aspect that explains her success. Another was her self-confidence – something that she seeks to teach now. “Someone once said to me ‘Christine, they’re never going to appreciate you unless they have to pay’ and what that meant: don’t be someone’s handmaid, make sure you put yourself forward and create a role that recognizes your skills. Women don’t need to be afraid – they just need to get on, step forward and have systems and leaders that support them.”

**The more women see women doing these types of jobs, the more they will be convinced that they have the capacity to do it**

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Uschi Schreiber is EY’s Global Government & Public Sector Leader.

uschi.schreiber@hk.ey.com
India’s population of more than one billion, together with its vast, eclectic land mass and multilingual and multicultural society, makes it one of the world’s most diverse countries. While achieving true diversity among its top government ranks remains some way off, Nita Chowdhury, Secretary of Youth Affairs, remains undaunted. Satish Kaushal finds out what makes her tick

Boosting Indian inclusivity

Thirty-five years of working in the heart of government would surely be enough for most people. Not so Nita Chowdhury, however. On the contrary, India’s Secretary of Youth Affairs is fully focused on helping India’s youth fulfill their potential and aspirations. Given that they total nearly 40% of India’s total population, slowing down is clearly not an option.

This group – aged between 15 to 35 years old – is crucial to India’s socioeconomic future and this means that much of her focus is on skills development and training, something she and her colleagues are working on with the assistance of the private sector. “We are leveraging various corporate social responsibility programs run by private sector firms, as well as simultaneously funding skill development and training initiatives with money allocated for existing programs,” she explains. And women are by no means excluded from such programs. “We emphasize helping women come out of their homes, connect among themselves and become self-reliant.”

The advancement of women remains a subject close to her heart. “The civil services space was a less explored territory for women back when I started my journey,” she recalls. “It is heartening to see more women colleagues joining the race since. Initially, issues such as traditional clothing clogged the minds of people. Such biases are fast changing, and the world is witnessing women stepping up participation in all fields. I personally propagate the idea of comfort dressing at work, and I find the Indian dress of Sari most suitable.”
Chowdhury graduated in the 1977 class of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS). Since then she has fulfilled an array of roles, ranging from industrial development, health and taxation to serving as Social Welfare Commissioner to Joint Secretary in the Department of Animal Husbandry. As careers go, it’s clear that hers has been quite a ride.

“My professional motto is ‘citizen always comes first,’ because it is the people who make a nation,” she says. “The Right to Information (RTI) is the best thing that has happened to India. Good things are happening to this country through RTI, and we are learning how to be more responsive and more responsible in our dealing with the citizens.”

This citizens-first mindset has been something that has long influenced how she deals with public policy challenges – irrespective of whatever role she was in. “When I was the Commissioner of the city of Moradabad in Uttar Pradesh, I successfully commissioned a housing scheme on the national highway, which required the acquisition of more than 1,000 acres of land,” she recalls. “For the villagers who sold their land, apart from the compensation, we developed education facilities for their children. We also provided them with commercial land as part of the housing scheme that concentrated on achieving painless delivery.”

Such experiences – of which there have been many during her career – are part of why she looks back on her time in government with no regrets. Indeed, she remains passionate about serving the public and strongly believes that Indian girls, many more of whom are now receiving a full education and acquiring more qualifications, would be similarly happy by working for the Government.

While the private sector offers you lucrative packages, the civil services offer you the invaluable chance of helping others and, thus, enjoying higher job satisfaction,” she says. “By joining the civil services, you get a chance to change the society. You get the opportunity to work in cities and villages across states, coordinate with politicians, NGOs and other social organizations. Addressing issues such as immunization, malnutrition and assistance in reducing communal dissonance gives a sense of satisfaction, as well as sense of fulfillment.”

A woman’s touch

Chowdhury believes that being a woman positively influences her approach. “We look at the softer aspects of issues or details,” she says. “Given the fact that there are a fewer number of women in the services gives us an occasional advantage. People are often more comfortable speaking to a woman. This helps us better understand the complete problem and come up with a solution as a joint effort. In 1990, I was working in the health department for a polio vaccination program that concentrated on achieving polio freedom in country. Sadly, local people were not very participative. As a rule, during my visits, I ensured that women participate actively and are encouraged to speak frankly because I feel that if you can influence a woman, you can influence her whole family. Especially in maternal health programs, I observed that something as basic as breast feeding of a child within one hour of being born was not implemented because of some family pressures. Such issues can be addressed easily by one woman to another. Similarly, during family planning programs, I could understand and empathize with the pain that a woman goes through and took measures to ensure successful delivery.”

Breaking down the barriers

Women leaders in India are hardly few and far between. Sectors such as health, social welfare and entrepreneurship have long benefited from their presence. But at the senior leadership level, Chowdhury is one of the few who have made it through to departmental secretary. When asked for what advice she would give to recent IAS women graduates on how to navigate the complex environment ahead of them, she says the first priority is to be open to all kinds of roles and responsibilities.

“In the beginning of your career, you largely work with social sectors, but that does not mean you can run away from donning a regulatory role too,” she says. “You have to prioritize and set your goals upfront because in the early years of the service, you are required 24/7 on the job, so you would need the continuous support of your family to manage your home and children, along with the job.”

The second factor reflects the concern in India, which has been growing in recent months, around the issue of women’s safety. “Women are continuously living under fear both in villages and in big metropolitan cities,” she points out. “We need to actively take responsibility to address this issue. For example, we collaborated with Delhi police to train 150 college women participants of Republic Day Parade in self-defence techniques. These women can be made representatives and further train at other institutions.”

A third key factor is deep interconnection across India’s diverse regions and states. “A successful initiative needs to be replicated across regions by continuous sharing of knowledge,” she says. “Women officers should regularly meet authorities to exchange ideas and learn in a group, so as to speed up the process of development and broad base the successful initiatives.”

And finally, she believes that a combination of strength and stamina are essential. “Women in India are considered as the softer sex and are deemed suitable for domestic chores and not administrative responsibilities,” she concludes. “You have to be ready to go that extra mile to change this mindset and convince people that men and women need to be placed at an equal footing.”

Satish Kaushal is Executive Director, Government Services, at EY India. satish.kaushal@in.ey.com

In conversation / Boosting Indian inclusivity

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Brazil. Country of carnivals, beaches, economic growth and football. Its melting pot of religions, languages, demographics and cultures, not to mention abundant natural resources, vast wildernesses and huge, bustling cities, marks it out as a country of rich diversity and one well-suited to the global spotlight in which it finds itself. But its diversity has not always been a force for good. Although it is led by a female president, deep divisions remain, as the country’s minister for policies in racial equality promotion Luiza Bairros can testify. And having risen to a senior position in government, overcoming gender and racial barriers along the way, she speaks from a position of considerable authority.

“I cannot think of myself as a woman without thinking of me as a black woman,” she says. “A black woman from my generation does not establish as a goal to become a minister of state. When you know the ins and outs of racism, you know your expectations may have limits. Therefore, the obstacles placed before me throughout my career had more to do with race than only with gender. I say that with confidence because this is backed up by data revealed by statistics in Brazil. Racial discrimination is much more present in Brazilian society than gender discrimination.

When observed from the salary perspective, Brazilian hierarchy puts white men at the very top, followed by white women, black men and then black women at the bottom,” she continues. “This shows an overlap of the presence of racism, rather than a gender issue per se. Gender issues do exist, but for a black woman the racial dimension will always represent more than gender. The racial condition makes gender discrimination much more complex for black women and, therefore, much harder to be overcome.”

Starting points

Such obstacles did not deter her from opting for a career in the public sector – a decision she made soon after graduation and prompted by her desire to serve the public and a longtime interest in public planning issues. A position with the Secretariat for Labor soon followed, where she focused on the exclusion of black workers in the labor market, something that she, fortunately, managed to avoid.

“Many times what is considered an asset in most people, can be considered a flaw if you’re a black woman,” she reflects. “I consider myself to be an assertive person, with some degree of courage and the ability to take hard decisions. This is usually seen as positive qualities in white women. In my case, sometimes are interpreted as arrogance and conceit. It is always an extremely difficult game for a black person to know what is expected of him or her, inside an environment dominated by racism.”

The struggle is ongoing. “I try not to care too much with how people interpret me,” she admits. “It’s a never-ending game. Sometimes you do absolutely normal things, and they are interpreted as excessive shyness. Other times you fight with strength, and it can be interpreted as arrogance or reverse racism. It is walking an extremely fine line. It’s one of racism’s most powerful weapons – setting limits for your actions, setting acceptable behavior that is considered appropriate for a black person, which is to be submissive. It is a struggle to escape the stereotype and be yourself.”

Bairros has never strayed far from confronting the shadow of racism during her career. Prior to her current role, she was involved in racism-fighting projects from the United Nations Development Program and served as the Secretary for the Promotion of Racial Equality in the State of Bahia for two years before her promotion to the ministry. Given what she believes is racism’s deep penetration of Brazilian society, it is clear that there is no shortage of issues to address. “Racism is a very important piece of Brazilian society, to the point of structuring all
of its hierarchies,” she says. “Today, despite all our advances, society is not unanimous on the matter. We live a very peculiar situation — Brazil deals with, faces, and debates racism, but we haven’t reached consensus on how to make its effects disappear. For example, last year the Federal Supreme Court of Justice unanimously declared Affirmative Actions constitutionally valid, and they have been used as public policy tools for a decade. Yet there are still influential conservative forces positioned against these measures, despite all evidence of the benefits they bring to society as a whole.”

Priorities in action

However, such is Bairros’ commitment to these reforms, she lists implementing the National Affirmative Action Program — ensuring that a host of individual policies are incorporated into the Federal Government by the end of President Dilma’s term in office — as one of her top three priorities. Another focus is strengthening the internal management and systems of her department, and completing the top three is a focus on the traditional societal groups: the Quilombola communities, the communities of African origin and gypsies.

We want to get all ministries to understand that issues related to these communities can only be dealt with if institutions work together in integrated manner,” she says. “These three priorities are linked together by another element, which is the National System for Promotion of Racial Equality. This system aims to foster collaboration among the three spheres of government, establishing federal, state and municipal competences for delivering the national policy for promotion of racial equality. As we implement these three linked priorities, we will make a huge step forward and reach the same organizational level as policies for food safety, for instance.”

But that’s not to say incorporating diversity into policy-making will be easy. “People, public managers and authorities must abandon racism,” she says. “If they fail to do so, they will not be able to manage processes of social inclusion. The problem in Brazil is that no one admits the existence of a white identity. There is a racial group that thinks of itself as universal — so universal that has no need for color. Therefore, white people — especially those in positions of power — do not consciously see that their place is a privilege and not an acquired right.”

Fortunately, the minister can wield significant influence in the fight for greater equality, and she goes on to express the faith that her position as a black woman is inspiring others to follow in her footsteps. “I hope so,” she says. “As much as I was inspired by other women, starting with the ones in my family — my mother, my great-aunts, in particular. I was reminded of this recently with the approval of extended benefits for domestic workers in Brazil. With many of my family members having served as domestic workers, this was a meaningful moment because it has rescued more than six million black women in this kind of occupation who were previously never entitled to anything. So this has a deep meaning for black people in general.

“At the same time, I remember these female domestic workers in my family,” she continues. “They were always role models, women who would always be asked first — even by the men — what should or should not be done. So these were very strong role models of how you can have an underappreciated social position and not be stripped from your leadership role. I also have met strong militant women in the black movement. What I am as a woman today is the result of my participation in the black movement. It was in the movement that I understood that being black does not make you less of a woman.”

This understanding is something that has helped propel her forward throughout her long and distinguished career — itself far from over. With projects still to pursue, and programs to implement, she is hopeful that a fairer, more equal Brazil lies within touching distance. A brighter, more positive future is the ambition — and few can doubt her determination to make this vision a reality.

Luiza Bairros ▲
In the last 30 years there have been some fundamental changes. Industrial occupational structures used to be divided into male jobs and female jobs. Professions that required technical skills were seen as the preserve of males, and service-oriented professions seen as the preserve of females. We have many women in Parliament; we have many women leading universities; we have women who are business executives. And we've accomplished our successes in a timeframe that has taken hundreds of years for many countries to achieve.

There are a number of sectors in which we seem to be making really excellent progress. For example, we've seen significant expansion of the access of women to university education. And it's strange that it's a little-known fact, but there are more female students at university than male students. This is an exciting development but one we need to probe as part of the underlying problems that South Africa faces because we have to ask questions about the disappearing male. I think that often, in South Africa when we discuss women in any special sectors, or when we discuss gender, we forget that “gender” applies to both men and women — and the challenge is ensuring the advancement of all in society.

In our country we have begun to work toward increased equality in a range of areas. But our movement has not been shaped by a change in attitude – it is primarily shaped by our constitution and the new laws we enacted post-democracy. Hence the problems that we confront in South Africa because we're not allowed time for a sociological reorientation of our society – we've relied on formal statute to engineer change. So while we celebrate, we're also aware of deep problems we have to address as a nation.

What's the point, for example, of having better-educated women if we find our aspirations blocked and our talents shortchanged in the world of work. If there is no space to express your ideas, or as happened to me once, if you're called “girlie” in a meeting, then it is very difficult to express a mature thought or to be taken seriously. We still have to address these aspects.

"Having quota on boards could perhaps be useful. Boards are full of men – they can’t all be brilliant!"

We still see that men are getting some of the better jobs. We are better qualified, but we're not getting the better jobs; why not? There are many reasons for this – a few perhaps form the basis for an agenda that women could pursue.

One of the reasons is that work continues to be structured for and around men. I’ll never forget my experience at the University of Cape Town. After some months it became clear that our male colleagues were spending more time together, but I couldn’t work out where, until one day I had to attend a meeting at the Sports Hall and I discovered there was a bar. And that was where they were spending their time, networking very effectively together, while we had to dash home to collect our children from after care and so on. This sort of thing has been going on for decades.

Families make a difference. Having a family has a huge impact on careers. Just as you’re progressing, you take time out, and when you come back, it’s as though you’re a different person. Of course, university-educated women are tending to have fewer children and to have them a little later than our parents did, but families do come along just when competition at work begins to get serious, and our workplaces are not geared toward that little fact of humanity.

The other thing that many researchers have found is that women don’t give themselves credit for being clever; they tend to be less self-confident, they allow their male colleagues to speak out and volunteer for promotion and better assignments, and women will feel it is inappropriate to make similar demands. We don’t negotiate for ourselves like men do; we negotiate for others instead. We don’t do it for ourselves.

We’re also very honest – and that’s good. But at times it can be a problem. For example, when the going gets tough at work, women decide to be part-time employees or to leave and don’t demand that the institution itself changes. Men won’t quit – they will rearrange their lives and if need be make things difficult for their families. It’s very rare for us to tell male partners that they will have to look after the kids for the next month because we have a tough assignment. They rearrange and expect families to bear the burden.
The cause of women empowerment has made much progress in Africa over recent decades, says South African Minister Naledi Pandor. But there is more to be done before women can feel truly equal partners and beyond.

I think there are some things that can be done. Countries have found that laws do make a difference, that equality has made a difference. We want equal opportunities and equal pay for equal work. Should we demand legislation to break the glass ceiling in the boardroom, for example? Norway has done it. Norway has introduced targets for all boards for all state-owned and publicly listed companies, and it seems to be working. Other countries are following suit – shifts have happened recently in Spain, France and the UK, and Germany is considering similar steps.

“We don’t want women leaders to be autocratic and gray suited; we want women leaders to be agents of change.”

I think quotas are somewhat of a problem, however. They may diminish the status of particular groups in society – people may say, “Oh, she’s only a quota appointment,” and so on. I think there are sometimes uses of quotas as tokenism, and that is what should always be watched. They can create tensions in the workplace. But on boards perhaps they could be useful. Boards are full of men – they can’t all be brilliant! I personally prefer targets because they mean that if you’re not appropriately qualified, then you won’t be appointed – that is the difference with quotas. Once you bring opportunity into place and people show they can perform, it should become a natural process and you won’t need to force it on anyone.

What does this mean for those who are working in the private sector and those who are working in the public sector? The drive toward gender equity is something that is being pursued by the entire continent. All African countries are looking at the issue of women leadership and women in the public and private sectors. This next decade from this year has been adopted by the General Assembly of the African Union as the Decade of Women. This means that if a company arrives for a meeting with a woman finance minister in Africa, for example, and you arrive in a huge delegation of men in suits, then you may find you don’t get a very good reception. If you’re not seen as affirming that women exist in society, then it may be difficult to do business in Africa. Global corporate companies need to be aware and responsive to the changing context on the African continent.

We have massive projects we intend to undertake on infrastructure development. People often assume that because it is infrastructure it may be bricks, mortar and machines, women won’t be too heavily involved. A lot of projects have a community development component to them and that often involves women – and if you’re not alert to this then you won’t successfully engage.

We also have to pay attention to the issues of training for leadership in management and so on. And of course, we don’t need the usual styles of leadership we’ve had before. We don’t want women leaders to be autocratic and gray suited; we want women leaders to be agents of change. Our way of doing things should be rather different, should be empowering, should be creating opportunities, should be demanding the same level of outcome and performance that must be done by every leader.

I think we need leaders who are transformative in character, leaders who inspire those they work with. Mentorship is sometimes absolutely necessary. One of the concerns one sometimes has is that women of my age were perhaps fortunate to be part of the struggle for equality and the struggle for political and socioeconomic rights. But sometimes we operate as though our children understand this struggle. We must never forget to teach the lesson that having opened the door, we must keep our foot there for it to remain open. Once it closes, then we go back rather than forward – so we have an important mentorship role to play. Not only do women make up more than half the workforce of the world, but I believe, and evidence proves, that they are also better than men at earning a university education. Let’s make this qualified majority work for women and work for our world.

Naledi Pandor is South African Minister of Home Affairs.

This article is drawn from remarks made during an EY Women Public Sector Leader’s event in Cape Town, March 2013.
Three sisters. All of whom overcame intense competition to join the Indian civil service at their first attempt and went on to serve in senior roles? No, it’s not an idea for a film but actually the true story of sisterly accomplishment and dedication to their country. What attracted them to a life of government service? And what are their thoughts about further empowering women across their country?

Meenakshi Anand Chaudhary

First to enter government ranks was the eldest of the three sisters, Meenakshi Anand Choudhary. Raised by a mother passionate about current affairs and a father whose career took him to the position of Professor of Political Science at Punjab University, in India, she was selected to serve as an Indian Administrative Services (IAS) officer (Class of 1967). In doing so she became the path finder and idol for her two younger sisters, Urvashi and Keshni, who were, 8 and 15 years younger. “I joined the civil service in order to live the values of my parents, fulfill my desire to serve the country and to be a part of the governance process,” she explains.

Her progression up the career ladder was swift, culminating in her appointment as the first woman Chief Secretary of Haryana, a state in Northern India that is primarily male-dominated. Prior to this role, she also served as the Indian Government’s Secretary of Sports and Youth Affairs, where she played a pivotal role in developing sports infrastructure across the country. “I have always been committed to the principle of transparent and citizen-centric administration,” she says — a perspective that saw her through many other roles, ranging from Director General of Prisons to Chairman...
and Managing Director of the state’s Electricity Board.

She refers to a lack of knowledge about the impact a civil servant can make to the life of people and women in general as the main reason for low participation of women in civil services. “Once we spread awareness about the importance of women’s presence and participation in policy-making, we can get more women on board and will be able to get more gender-sensitive policies and programs implemented,” she says. “Support of the family is imperative in maintaining the work-life balance for any woman. Families need to cut back all the barriers and support girls in all their endeavors by providing access to education, better health care, and empower them to make independent decisions. Once these are provided, girls can dream for both themselves and society.”

**Urvashi Gulati**

Urvashi Gulati joined the IAS in 1975 and went on to serve in senior positions in state departments as varied as Irrigation, Urban Affairs, Health Care and the Haryana State Co-operative Supply and Marketing Federation. She believes that a woman’s role in the civil service is not confined to only education or health sectors, but the roles and responsibilities completely depend on her experience and capabilities. “I would absolutely rejoin the civil services if given a choice,” she adds. “The past 37 years of my career have been so interesting and exciting that it has never felt long.”

While serving as Principle Secretary, Health Care, she encouraged private doctors to be put on the panel of public hospitals and also promoted the proper availability of equipment, medicines, hygiene, training of auxiliary nurse midwives and transport facilities. “I think it was the woman in me and not the civil servant I had become that made me understand and address all these issues in a better way,” she reflects. And after joining the Rural Development Department, she drew on her experience at the Health Department by challenging the status quo and focusing on the implementation of an important new sanitation program. “Instead of taking it as an engineering scheme, I made it a community-led program, which resulted in a lot of progress in the villages,” she recalls. Following her retirement, she became the State Information Commissioner and is currently handling the entire Right to Information Act implementation in the state of Haryana, legislation which encourages far greater transparency in the business of government.

“I never had a problem working with male colleagues as I believe it is not one’s gender but the level of one’s competence and performance which defines one’s stature in an organization,” she says. “The Government of India has always been very sensitive toward the women of the nation, and to empower women, measures such as job quotas and provision of scholarships for their education have been taken. To promote women’s participation in civil service, it is important to promote flexible working so that they can manage their various roles in life. Also important is providing women with the required skill set and change the mindset of men so that women are accepted in their workplace as equal and competent co-workers.”

**Keshni Anand Arora**

Keshni Anand Arora was very much influenced by the success of her two elder sisters, and this motivated her to follow in their footsteps. She more than succeeded. A graduate of the 1983 IAS intake, her entry exam performance topped any other woman and was second across all of India. An industry specialist, her career has taken her to roles such as Managing Director of Haryana Financial Corporation and Director of Industries and Information Technology.

Her most important assignment to date is her current role as Deputy Director General for Project Aadhaar in Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, and Jammu and Kashmir and the city of Chandigarh. This program aims to provide aims a unique identity number to all Indians. In order to enroll the maximum number of women, she conducted a women’s empowerment day in Himachal, where special verification for women took place. “I think that Project Aadhaar will be a real game changer and will act as a platform on which India can accelerate its development,” she says. Affecting the regions of Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, and Chandigarh, the project is the world’s largest government-to-citizen program. It aims, in due course to provide a unique identity number to the entire Indian population of 1.2 billion people and EY is advising the Government on its implementation.

Earlier in her career, she was appointed as the first woman District Commissioner in Haryana, and her success in the role paved the way for more women officers getting appointed to the same position. She believes that women should become economically independent and be self-assured when assuming any position of leadership. “Society’s attitude toward women should also change so that they get equal opportunity to work at all levels,” she adds. “I think that skills and knowledge are the source of emotional empowerment for women, and this underlines the importance of effective training and career guidance – not only in the civil service but in all fields.”

Improvement in governance is a continuous process, she believes, and her future plans include making significant contributions by launching programs that can make the people of Haryana self-reliant. In doing so, such projects will also make Haryana’s economy and society a benchmark for other Indian states.

The story of these three sisters, who made it to IAS, is unparalleled in the annals of Indian Administrative service so far. They are great role models for India’s young women of today. While all three believe that support of family is necessary in order to maintain the work-life balance and to move up the career ladder, they have raised expectations and have more than proved themselves in positions that had previously been uncharted by any other Indian woman. Their collective success further demonstrates that gender does not matter. What’s important is the capability of an individual in executing their responsibilities.
It’s a good time to be in Ghana. An increasingly important part of a continent well on the way to becoming one of the most dynamic places in the world to do business, the country is a shining example of how an encouraging economic environment has catalyzed rapid growth that is set to become sustainable and inclusive in the future.

As Africa moves forward – a process driven by factors that include hugely favorable demographics, macroeconomic reforms and abundant natural resources – Ghana’s ongoing transformation rests on high economic growth rates (boosted recently by oil production), political stability and an environment that is generally conducive to doing business. Little wonder, then, that conversations about the investment options available are increasingly shifting from “why” to “where” and “how.”

But that’s not to say Ghana is without its share of challenges. It may have enjoyed robust GDP growth of approximately 8.5% in 2012 (and 14.4% in 2011), but its Government is focusing on issues such as strengthening the domestic capital market, containing inflation and making the tax system more efficient.

Playing a key role in this process is Magdalene Apenteng, the country’s Chief Economics Officer and Director of the Public Investment Division of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning. As one of the Government’s few women in senior ranks, she is well placed to comment on the issue of diversity, describing it as key to informed decision-making and constructive participation at all levels. “Having and sharing views and discussions with counterparts both male and female improves management processes and productivity,” she says.

Apenteng has enjoyed a career that has spanned different countries and both the public and private sectors. A specialist in international aid and debt management techniques that enhance aid effectiveness, she has consulted for organizations such as the World Bank Group, the Commonwealth Secretariat, and the West African Institute for Economic and Financial Management. She has also provided support and advisory services to countries including Cameroon, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Suriname, Guyana, Zambia, Uganda, the Gambia and Sierra Leone.

Breaking down barriers

When asked to describe the visible barriers she has encountered during the course of her illustrious career, she pinpoints several key challenges. “The situation is even more prevalent in most African countries where other factors such as cultural biases are very common,” she says. “This has often led to inequities in leadership positions, with men always commanding a very high percentage in such positions of influence and authority.”

Ghana’s growth story and potential means it is fast becoming a country to watch, even in a continent evolving as rapidly as Africa. But how is it approaching the subject of diversity? The country’s Chief Economics Officer, Magdalene Apenteng, gives Ferdinand Gunn some answers.
A key reason for this, she believes, is the ineffective implementation of policies aiming to help women progress. “Girls and women who aspire to top positions have not been encouraged or provided with the opportunity,” she continues. “These barriers are observed through infancy, through the educational systems, and even through marriage or family relationships as well as in the workplace. Visibility of women in high places may at best represent about 20% to 25% of existing leadership positions.”

Invisible barriers such as conscious and unconscious bias are even more difficult to address in a country like Ghana. “In our chieftaincy hierarchy women would normally not be chosen as kings or chiefs; they would at best be advisers or queen mothers, mostly elders relegated to the background,” she points out. “On a daily basis, women have to balance activities of family life and work-related issues effectively to avoid being stigmatized as ineffective mothers and caretakers of the home. They therefore double up to work very hard in both the workplace and also at home taking care of their families including the men who invariably occupy top leadership positions.” In this context it is even more crucial for women to possess a raft of strong character traits, with Apenteng listing “confidence, aptitude for excellence, patience, accommodating, vigilant, bold, hardworking, diligent and firm” as key to enabling career progression.

When asked to account for the main reasons behind a relatively low number of women in leadership positions in the public sector, Apenteng says it often comes down to the fact that men use their dominant positions in the governance structure to give themselves the relevant strategic positions. “As most women play the dual role of housewives and combine both activities at home and the office and encumbered with the stress of this dual role, they become hesitant in taking leadership positions as they juggle between being bread winners, housewives and mothers,” she says. “Most women in such leadership positions have to work very hard to maintain their positions.”

An important step in addressing such systemic barriers often lies with women themselves, says Apenteng, who believes they need to be more assertive in the workplace. “I would urge women to stand out very tall amongst their male counterparts by being consistent, diligent and bold in undertaking all their endeavors,” she says. “Most of all women should be truthful and be examples to their peers, superiors and juniors in all they do be it home, family, workplaces or at any social places of interest.”

The role of government

Aiding and abetting such a call to arms is the country’s recently-established Ministry of Gender and Social Protection, which seeks to promote the welfare of women and children. “I am hopeful that this new Ministry would clearly identify the inhibitions that prevent girls from aspiring into various leadership roles as they are educated,” says Apenteng. “There should be a concerted effort to encourage women and girls to aspire to positions of decision-making and responsibility from home, classrooms and workplaces. The Ministry should identify mechanisms that would promote and enhance the role of women and [girls] in society but not ignoring the boys as well.”

Apenteng’s interest in diversity extends to acting as a mentor to women in her workplace and serving as Vice President of her alma mater, a girls secondary school that trains and provides education to girls aged between 13 and 17. Networking, too, is important and she firmly believes that governments have much to learn from each other. “The initial steps could involve the use of a global network, possibly chaired by EY, with the view to soliciting concrete views and suggestions on moving this global process forward,” she says. “There could be developed a library of activities and examples of how women have been able to break the barriers of becoming leaders and assuming leadership roles in their respective societies and the problems that they face and how these have been tackled.”

But while this type of activity is important, it does not represent a magic solution to the diversity problem. Indeed, Apenteng is skeptical over whether any government is able to do enough by itself, citing the fact that other issues and problems can impact efforts to make progress on this agenda. “The most important role of government is to have the willpower to continue ensuring that these problems are addressed and make concerted efforts to promote actions that promote women empowerment at all times,” she concludes. “Once critical areas for improvement have been identified, the Government may have to promote legislation to ensure that some of its policies for women empowerment are actually accepted and implemented by a broader section of the people.”

But she remains optimistic – and doesn’t rule out the possibility of a woman serving as President of Ghana in the near future. “Why not? There are challenges, but that is not so misplaced. Women in Ghana will have to be more assertive to ensure that we are able to aspire confidently to this position in the next 10 to 15 years.”

Ferdinand Gunn is Country Leader, EY Ghana. ferdinand.gunn@gh.ey.com
Talking Turkey

As the solitary woman in Turkey’s Government, Fatma Sahin is well-placed to comment on the country’s progress toward greater gender equality. With the country’s economic growth accelerating and its global footprint getting bigger, are Turkey’s women also poised for a similar surge forward? EY’s Tauno Olju finds out

Fatma Sahin knows from personal experience how challenging it can be for a woman to climb the career ladder in Turkey. “I worked as an engineer in the private sector before I got involved in politics,” she recalls. “I struggled with the notion of ‘Can a woman be an engineer?’ Nothing comes free or easily. You have to work – and work hard!”

It’s a mission statement that might easily be applied to Turkey as a whole. Having overcome a series of political and economic challenges, the country is now enjoying a period of stable and solid economic growth and with more to come; its economy is set to grow at least 5% each year for the next 25 years, according to EY’s Rapid-Growth Markets Forecast. Partly this growth can be attributed to its geographic location as the junction of Europe, Asia and the Middle East. This location, together with a huge domestic market and stable macroeconomic policy, has enabled it to become the 18th largest economy in the world in terms of GDP.

But has this economic progress been mirrored by advances in the area of gender diversity? It doesn’t appear so. EY’s Worldwide Index of Women as Public Sector Leaders found that just 13.6% of its public sector leaders are women – similar to other newly emerging economies such as Argentina and Mexico. And the World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Report 2011 ranked Turkey 122 out of 135 countries, second to the bottom in the category of upper-middle income countries. Clearly, there remains some work to be done.

When asked what she thinks are the main reasons behind the low number of women in leadership positions in the Turkish public sector, Sahin, Minister for Family and Social Policies since 2001, prefers to focus on what she predicts will be a more positive future. “We believe that we will be more successful than we were in the past,” she says. “Take the proportion of women who hold upper management positions, for example, which varies among countries. The world average is 8%, with 9% for the EU, 5% for the US, but it’s 12% in Turkey. And in academia, the number of professors and assistant professors is above the world average rate as well. That’s how we build a strong community, and without a strong community we can’t achieve anything. In order to fulfill our aim to become the 10th strongest economy in the world, we have to make this strength more visible, more influential and more effective.”

Equal opportunities in education are the most important power to increase active participation of the women in every aspect of life”
And it’s not all about women either – men have an important role to play too, she adds. “In the end, all of us are in some sort of competition, either with ourselves or with others. We all are thirsty for success, and all of us, including the men, are struggling for success and seeking to climb the ladder in whatever we do. Men are struggling with the same issues as women do. There is a huge competition going on. If you want to be in this, you have to manage this competition. And this requires knowledge, equipment of any sort and strength of character to see it through.”

While the share of women in Turkey’s public sector workforce is around 37%, their representation in leadership positions is much lower, which seems to indicate that women are prone to stay in the lower-level jobs and cannot successfully break through to higher ranks. To make it easier for women to make better progress in terms of their careers, Sahin says that women need more networks to help support themselves moving forward.

“A decision which has come out from a decision-making mechanism consisting only of men doesn’t constitute a strong decision.”

“A decision which has come out from a decision-making mechanism consisting only of men doesn’t constitute a strong decision,” she points out. “There should be opinions from both sides: women and men. Society is ready for this. Society doesn’t have a problem with female politician, with female governor or mayor as long as we keep the emotional state in balance. If we don’t, things go awry. That’s a proven fact.”

And she goes on to laud the contribution of education to addressing the gender divide. “Equal opportunities in education are the most important power to increase active participation of women in every aspect of life,” she says. “Better education opportunities will encourage women to be more involved in the professional world.”

Such an ambition is core to delivering a stronger society in the long term, she says. “We have a project to provide day care centers for working mothers so that our women will find more time and opportunity to focus and to gain more experience in their business life. Our goal is to form a society which knows how to share, how to produce and how to promote individuals who make a future for themselves as well as for others. Every step taken for women means an investment on the future of Turkey.”

Looking and learning from examples across borders is another important aspect of driving transformational change, and Sahin is quick to cite the example of a project that was recently unveiled at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. “We know that success takes a collaboration of efforts and powers,” she says. “We shared one example of this collaboration with the world last month in Davos focusing on equality in work.

“With co-chairmen Gürler Sabanci and Ferit Şahenk, who are two prominent business leaders in Turkey, we have started the project that shall encourage moving the current state of business life in favor of women, to make women more active in decision-making processes, and to give them equal opportunities to men,” she says. “The goal of the project that will be continued for three years is to increase the participation of the women in business and to reduce the gender gap in economic contribution to at least a level of 10%. Considering the positive effects of having women in business, for both individuals and society, it’s clear that a collaboration of all stakeholders, and continuing these efforts are important.”

Indeed, such teamwork has been a key catalyst in Turkey’s economic resurgence, she believes. “Over the last decade Turkey owes its steady growth and development, in other words, its success in economic, social, political and cultural fields, mostly to both public and private organizations,“ she says. “This success belongs to both women and men. In the past we weren’t listening to each other, we didn’t have ability to empathize, or we weren’t aware of this ability. Now, though, I listen to my friends intently, and they listen to us. We are trying to understand what they mean, what we could do for the best of the country from these opinions. This understanding will in time turn into the success of the country.”

But this is no time for complacency. Sahin believes that positive discrimination in favor of women would entrench and accelerate the gains already made. “We have to achieve one more thing, and this is to be open to every different opinion, to consider every point of view regardless of whether they are wrong or right,” she says. “Even the wrong ideas and opinions have a power to show the right direction. In this context, every different thought is important for us. We have to consider everything from the women’s point of view. This is our biggest duty, our biggest social and political responsibility.”

Such a turn of events would help make it more likely that in the future there will be more than just one woman in the Turkish Government. Sahin, though, is quick to pay tribute to her male colleagues. “They give me great support and facilitate the way for me to do my duties and my job in the best way,” she says. “For the first time in the history of Turkey, women are represented with a rate of 14% in Parliament. I firmly believe that this rate will go higher because we are a strong team under a strong leadership. We still have a lot to do for this country. We only can achieve our ambitions for Turkey through teamwork. And we have the will and encourage achieving this goal.”

Tauno Olju is Director, Government and EU Advisory Services, EY Turkey. tauno.olju@tr.ey.com
Rapid-Growth Markets Forecast: winter 2013

Despite the performance of 25 leading rapid-growth markets (RGMs) showing a slight dip last year due to slow global growth, RGMs have now started to regain momentum. Our quarterly Rapid-Growth Markets Forecast expects growth in the 25 markets to collectively accelerate to 5.4% in 2013 and then 6.4% in 2014. This is in comparison to the lackluster performance of the developed markets – particularly the Eurozone, which is expected to shrink by 0.3% this year.

However, fortunes will vary between geographies, with RGMs in emerging Asia and Latin America expecting growth to pick up from 7.0% in 2013 to 7.8% in 2014 and 3.8% in 2013 and 4.8% in 2014, respectively. The economic outlook for emerging Europe will remain subdued due to continued weakness in the Eurozone while lower oil prices will continue to hold back growth in the Middle East. “Business and political leaders alike may exhale a sigh of relief,” says Alexis Karklins-Marchay, Co-Leader of the Emerging Markets Center. “The slowdown of rapid-growth markets during 2012 seems to be merely a stumble from which they are now recovering. They are becoming the locomotives of a global recovery in which developed economies will be the laggards.”

All of the RGMs have reduced trade barriers over the last 20 years, opening their economies to trade and the sharing of knowledge. This has continued to have a positive impact on their economies. In the final quarter of 2012, encouraging signs started to emerge that the more trade-oriented RGMs, particularly those in Asia and Latin America, were picking up pace due to a combination of an improvement in intra-RGM trade and the impact of steps taken earlier in 2012 to ease monetary and fiscal policy. The forecast shows that during the next 10 years bilateral trade between the emerging Asian economies will continue to increase as demand rises for more sophisticated consumer products from the expanding middle classes.

Looking ahead, Karklins-Marchay believes that the outlook for the RGMs looks very positive. “The majority of the markets have proved to be resilient to the recent global slowdown,” he concludes. “However, it is important that they focus on political stability, stable and prudent macroeconomic policy, high capital investment and a well-balanced trade policy to reflect the changing face of the global economy.”

Moving Europe forward: innovating for a prosperous future

The pursuit of innovation, and with it the economic growth we all desire, continues to intensify. That Europe’s policy-makers understand this is beyond doubt. Strenuous efforts have long been made to strengthen innovation in Europe with a diverse array of programs, projects and funding mechanisms extending out from Brussels to the borders of the EU. But how effective have they been? Does the EU’s innovation policy fully reflect the eclectic needs of industry and society?

Working with the renowned Brussels-based think tank the Centre for European Policy Studies, EY has once again undertaken a cross-Europe survey of 680 business leaders to discover their perception of the EU’s innovation policy. The results make for intriguing reading. Policy-makers should be energized by the news that business leaders view the EU as a key player in driving forward this agenda, with 76% believing it has the capability to develop a more effective approach to research and innovation. Yet 81% believe EU policy is too fragmented and requires more coordination, and 66% call for more funds to be allocated to foster innovation.

“At a time when global competition has never been stronger, and when rising incomes and favorable demographics are creating a massive new opportunity in
Globalization and new opportunities for growth

Globalization is still increasing among a majority of the world's 60 leading economies according to the EY's annual globalization report, Looking beyond the obvious: globalization and new opportunities for growth.

The report draws on two sources of original research: EY's Globalization Index, which measures the world's 60 largest economies according to their degree of globalization relative to their GDP, and a survey of 750 senior business executives worldwide, conducted in late 2012, canvassing their opinion on globalization.

While most forecasters believe global GDP will be in the range of 3% to 3.5% in 2013 with a modest increase in subsequent years, the Index suggests that globalization will continue to advance, driven primarily by technology and the cross-border flow of ideas. It also highlights the improved globalization scores in the last 12 months for medium-sized rapid-growth markets such as Vietnam, Malaysia, Thailand and Philippines as well as smaller European countries including Belgium, Slovakia and Hungary.

“Globalization continues to define our business landscape with increasing levels of cross-border trade, capital and labor integration,” says Jim Turley, Chairman and CEO of EY. “Despite the highly volatile economic backdrop, the trend for greater integration and closer cooperation continues to outweigh the threat of protectionism for the majority of the world’s markets.”

However, there are real concerns from the survey respondents that continuing weak growth combined with increased global competition could spark more protectionism in the next 12 months. The respondents also specifically pointed to the increasing challenges of operating in some BRIC economies as well as slowing growth in some BRIC markets. As a result nearly half of the survey’s respondents expect an increase in protectionism in the BRIC countries as well as an increase in developed markets.

Turley concludes: “The nature of globalization continues to evolve and change. Technology continues to enable and enhance the flow of capital, ideas and innovation in ways that are increasingly hard to anticipate. The challenge for business is how to monitor, evaluate and respond as rapidly and effectively as they can, to a dynamic environment that cannot be dealt with by an ‘off-the-shelf solution.’”
Italy is the fifth most populous country in Europe and the 23rd most populous in the world. As a charter member of NATO and the European Economic Community, Italy has been at the forefront of European economic and political unification and is also a member of the G8, along with Germany, France, Japan, the US, Canada and Russia. However, while Italy is the third-largest economy in the Eurozone, it has still fallen under severe scrutiny by financial markets as a result of structural impediments to growth and high public debt, which topped 126% of GDP in 2012 and is expected to peak at 128% in 2013.

Over the past decade EY Italy has successfully built up a key advisory role at all levels of the Italian Government, public health care providers and other multilateral institutions. We offer a wide array of services grouped under the following main clusters: public finance and procurement, health care, IT Advisory, and public policies and EU-funded projects.

Public finance and procurement
We aim to support corporate clients in the buying process and to act as a catalyst for the public buyers’ community. The pillars of this approach are innovation, quality and cost savings, transparency and process simplification. Most recently, the Italian Government launched a Spending Review program, which aims to reduce spending and maximize efficiencies. A major participant in this process is Consip S.p.A., a public stock company owned by the Italian Ministry of the Economy and Finance and responsible for defining, implementing and awarding tenders on behalf of other public administrations. EY is drawing on its 10-year relationship with Consip and its deep knowledge of the organization, sourcing strategies, processes, technology and regulatory constraints to support it in the Government’s cost analysis.

Health care
EY Italy’s health care team is made up of more than 25 fully dedicated professionals focused on regional health care departments. Through strategic partnerships and tactical alliances, the team is able to provide integrated planning support, cost and performance management, business strategy support and finance and account reporting. Traditional solutions customized to the health care sector include innovative models for compliance, social welfare governance, and financial due diligence and investments evaluation.

IT advisory
We are supporting large transformation projects driven by ICT solutions and managed primarily by the Central Government. Goals and expected outcomes of this increased focus include helping to cut costs in government budgets and improving efficiency and effectiveness, thus increasing productivity; reducing the administrative burden; and creating greater transparency, accountability and citizen participation.

Public policies and EU funds
Long-term relationships first established in 1997 and a team of around 200 people have EY Italy poised to become the absolute leader in management of EU structural funds on the eve of the 2014-20 EU program roll-out. Priorities for the 2014-20 program center on better management of spending procedures; administrative management; control and simplification; integrated territorial investments; training and employment; territorial cooperation and urban development; welfare; and research; innovation and technological development.

Contact:

Dario Bergamo
Government & Public Sector Leader
+39 06 6753 5601
dario.bergamo@it.ey.com
Spotlight on women in Italy

Italy shows a low rate of women in all sectors of employment in both the private and public sectors. There are two main reasons:

- **Cultural dimension**: Italian women are often recognized as primarily mothers and wives. A government job can be a good solution only if it doesn’t involve many responsibilities and time spent in the workplace. For this reason the women’s government roles are predominately administrative rather than positions of leadership. In addition, the lack of many child care centers increases the barriers between women and public employment leadership positions.

- **Political dimension**: the Italian public sector is closely related with the political affairs, and the Italian Government is composed mainly by men. The general approach is that women are able to manage services connected with social affairs, youth, education, and gender equality and equity, but they are excluded from significant roles and decision-making positions because government decisions are taken exclusively by men.

To be a woman with leadership responsibilities demands extra effort – especially in relationships with male colleagues and supervisors but also to ensure you deliver added value in terms of performances and results. To have a significant career, women must make extra effort to be self-confident, influential and determined – an approach not always recognized by men.

There are some Italian regions in which women’s equality is a reality, with the professionalism of women recognized and balanced with men’s contribution. In my experience, ministries and national public institutions are less oriented to gender balance than regional and local authorities – maybe because they are more influenced by the political approach. Recently the number of women in Parliament has increased, and this is an encouraging sign. It is important that jobs and sectors that women struggle to penetrate (engineering, finance, construction and many more) become more open and inclusive. Similarly, welfare services for families, such as children care centers, are increased and improved to meet rising demand. 

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We meet ...

In this regular column we catch up with senior EY government leaders about the issues they are seeing in their respective market. Here, we talk to EY’s Borbala Czako about how the World Bank Group is addressing the challenge of gender inclusion in developing countries around the world.

Why is the issue of gender so important to the World Bank Group? Gender has been on the agenda of the World Bank for many, many years. This is because when we talk about “gender” in a developing country context, we are talking about issues like families and children. Women are the ones in a family who focus on the education of both their sons and daughters – often fathers tend to just focus on their sons. If women can be more educated, then a range of socioeconomic benefits will follow.

What are the key challenges facing women in developing countries? The World Bank has conducted research in this area and soon realized that a country’s development often hinges on issues like whether or not women are educated and are able to go on and enter the workforce. Women can really strengthen a country’s economic power and GDP; if they can be involved in working outside of the home, then the country’s development pace will accelerate.

What more needs to be done to further empower women around the world? I think the legal environment is very important. Women need to have formal, legal access to the right to own their own land and their own business. From a World Bank perspective, something that it is really focused on is ensuring that women have the necessary access to finance when it comes to forming and running their own businesses. This is really important. Normally, women are less able to get finance than men. Often, they have to pay a far higher interest rate than men do due to a range of long-term factors, with cultural barriers a particular concern.

What has changed under Dr. Jim Yong Kim’s leadership of the World Bank Group? Dr. Kim, who is the first doctor to lead the Bank, has a tremendous history of transformational leadership in his previous roles, particularly at the World Health Organization. He has only been in post for a relatively short time, so it is a little early to say. But in general, when a new president comes in, they normally have a different approach to their predecessor, and I think that gender will be high on his agenda in the months and years going forward. I think he is the right person, in the right place at the right time, to steer the Bank toward even greater success in the future.

Why should governments go on funding development programs, given the ongoing squeeze on their budgets? It’s not just the right thing to do morally, but development aid is also the right thing to do from an economic perspective. In giving development aid to countries, governments in more mature economies are helping create a future market for their own country’s products and services, and they transfer knowledge and innovation. Development programs therefore help both the donor country and the recipient to catalyze economic growth.

What will be the role and purpose of the World Bank Group in the future? It’s important to remember where the World Bank has come from. It was created in the aftermath of the Second World War. The purpose of the Bank then was to help reconstruct and develop economies. Over time there have been different challenges, and the Bank has always sought to adapt to the changing environment it operates in. For example, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the International Monetary Fund, which is a sister bank of the World Bank Group, came under the spotlight as it was said that it was no longer needed. Well, since the financial crisis it has had a crucial role to play in helping countries recover. Similarly, the World Bank played an important part in the preparation of the Millennium Development Goals, and these continue to help bind the development community together. The Bank, then, has an important role to play – and will do so into the future.

Borbala Czako is World Bank Group Global Cluster Leader, Gender Inclusion, at EY. She is a former Hungarian Ambassador to the UK.

veronica.messori@it.ey.com

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Veronica Messori, Director, EY Italy veronica.messori@it.ey.com

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Borbala.Czako@uk.ey.com
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