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# *Inclusive mobility*

*2 September 2016*

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## **Presenter**

Abbie Cooke, host

## **Panellists**

Susie Babani  
Jane Cheung  
Aoife Flood

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### **Abbie Cooke:**

So welcome to this PwC Global Mobility Podcast to explore and discuss gender diversity and mobility programs with a focus on the Asia Pacific region.

PwC released the Modern Mobility: Moving Women with Purpose study in thought leadership earlier this year. The study surveyed and gathered in facts from 130 global mobility executives and almost 4,000 internationally focused professionals, over 2,000 of whom were women from over 40 countries. It included those who are interested in mobility, are currently experiencing or have completed a mobility experience.

My name is Abbie Cooke. I'm a Senior Manager in our International Assignment Solutions team in Melbourne, Australia, and I'm joined today by an extraordinary panel who are sitting around the world and coming together for this discussion.

Susie Babani is Chief Human Resources Officer for the ANZ Bank based in Melbourne, and Susie has also worked in the UK, China, Philippines, Canada and the US, and has visited in total 82 countries and still counting. Susie is passionate about diversity and inclusion, and will touch on many of the initiatives which she's led ANZ with a focus on gender equality.

Jane Cheung is a mobility expert and PwC partner based in Shanghai leading the International Assignment Solutions team. Jane has lived, studied and began her career in the US, then worked in Hong Kong for ten years meeting expats from all over the world before transferring to Shanghai for the past six years.

Aoife Flood is the lead researcher and author of the Moving Women with Purpose survey that I mentioned, providing great insights into this area. Aoife is a senior manager in the PwC Global Diversity and Inclusion Program Office based in Dublin, and has also completed an international assignment with PwC to the US, which I'm sure we'll hear more about in the podcast.

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Thank you for joining us all today. Aoife I'll turn to you first. Aoife, from your global research, can you summarise for those who are not familiar the key findings and insights.

***Aoife Flood:***

So for PwC it was really important for us to undertake this research, because really what we were trying to do was create some impetus around the gender global mobility gaps that exist. There really is a significant gap. Only 20 percent of the current international assignee population is female, and this is despite the fact that we really are experiencing unprecedented female demand for mobility.

So for example 71 percent of female millennials globally said that they want to work abroad during their careers. The research reveals that there really is a lot of work that organisations can do in this area. For example we're currently challenged by a number of diversity disconnects.

Sixty nine percent of large multinationals said that they move employees to develop their succession pipeline of future leaders, yet only a minority of organisations have global mobility and diversity strategies that are currently aligned. More worryingly, only 22 percent said that they were actively trying to increase their female international mobile population.

This is despite the fact the research also identified that the majority of organisations said that women were under represented in their organisation's mobile population.

But faced with today's fast changing workforce demographic, global mobility strategies that do not fully include women, will simply not deliver to their full potential.

***Abbie Cooke:***

Thank you Aoife. That's a great recap.

ANZ Bank is an organisation with a primary presence in Australia, New Zealand and Asia Pacific. Further to Aoife's comments on the global research, what are your headline insights, one I suppose as an expatriate, and two as a leader in the Asia Pacific region?

***Susie Babani:***

Some of the highlights for me, first of all that many women do want the opportunity to be expats. It's just assumed that less of them do. So I think we do have an issue of unconscious bias that goes on in this place. That would be one headline.

The second one really is trying to encourage women to grab the opportunity if they get it, and actually say is it a good thing to spend some time living and working in a country other than your own. I think personally the insights, the experiences, the perspective and confidence I've gained are hard to achieve in any other way, and you feel more able to take on anything.

So we know it provides confidence. It gives women confidence generally to go for other jobs. The only challenge I guess, and again this is what I've suffered from, is that once you're hooked you'll want to do it again and again and again.

Finally I think an observation again, and many years in HR, that when it comes to mobility I think women are a lot more honest about whether or not they would be able to be considered for an expat assignment. They're often more likely to think about other commitments, and say that they would not be mobile. Whereas men are more likely to say they'll always be mobile, except when you actually offer them the role and then many of them turn it down because they also have those other commitments.

So I think it's very easy to be put off by the initial response from women, just because men tend to say yes they will until you actually offer them the role in a place they don't want to go to, and then it's a bit different. So those would be my headlines.

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**Abbie Cooke:**

That's great. We are going to look at the barriers a little bit more as we move through the conversation.

Jane, what are you hearing from leaders in the Asia Pacific region on the importance and focus of gender diversity and inclusion in their mobility programs?

**Jane Cheung:**

The global statistic shows there is about 84 percent of females would like to have international experiences, however the percentage for Asia is 86 percent of women feel like they want to gain international experiences. The reason for that behind it is because there is a culture in the Asia society, especially in China, women are being raised that the mindset for them is they need to work. They are never being taught they need to be – once they get married they're going to be a housewife. So these are the culture behind it, and especially in China there is a one child policy. A lot of women will be treated equally, especially in the first tier cities. So they've got equal opportunity of education, same as for men. So therefore more and more females in Asia, especially in China, they prefer to gain international assignment experiences.

Just giving an example of our internal PwC system, we do have a mobility program among Asia Pacific that we transfer people for example from Hong Kong to Singapore, from Singapore to China, from China to Malaysia. So we have this program currently invested, and we've got a lot of female employees raise their hand that they would love to participate.

The program is actually at the initial stage of their career, so of course most of the female assignees, they are not married, they're single, but that doesn't say – even if they have a family, they still would like to go, because we offer assignments on a short term basis as well, so from three to six months. So there's a different variety of mobility programs which encourage our female employees to participate.

**Abbie Cooke:**

We've all touched on the barriers to female mobility, the unconscious bias and the perceived barriers that are out there. During the study, during the Moving Women with Purpose study, it was surveyed what were the top barriers perceived by women, men and global mobility leaders. We looked at this on a global level, and then we looked at it for the Asia Pacific cut, and overwhelmingly the number one perceived barrier for men and women both globally and in the Asia Pacific region was that women with children do not want to undertake international assignments.

This is the number three barrier listed by the global mobility leaders.

Organisations having no clear view of their employees who are willing to be internationally mobile was the number two reason cited by women in Asia Pacific, and this was the number one reason cited by global mobility leaders in the global survey.

Women not wanting to put their partner or spouse's higher income at risk was the number three reason that was cited by women in Asia Pacific, with men in the region rating a lack of female role models with mobility experience their number three listed barrier. So consistency amongst those top four reasons globally and within the Asia Pacific region of what the perceived barriers are.

Interestingly though, Asia Pacific data highlighted that 3.5 percent of the total female respondents went on an international assignment with their dependants or children only, with no partner or spouse, and this is in comparison to zero percent for the men.

So Aoife you're very familiar with these findings. What jumped out as the most interesting to you when it came to the barriers that this research identified?

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***Aoife Flood:***

Abbie, I think I'd cover two in particular. I think the first one is that women do not want to put their partner or spouse's income at higher risk, and the second that women with children do not want to undertake international assignments.

I think it's really important that we make sure in organisations as decision makers and ourselves, that we're not letting the prevalence of stereotypes, and for example that over-associate women with families, have an impact on talent decisions and make sure they're not permeating what are often assumed rather than actual barriers to female mobility.

I think this was really interesting when we look at the findings in this research. So women and men in Asia Pac identify the fact that women do not want to put their partner's or spouse's higher income at risk as a tough barrier to mobility. What's really interesting is that 79 percent of women in Asia Pac are part of a dual career couple, and also 79 percent of those are either the primary breadwinner or earn equal salaries to their partner or spouse. So actually nearly one third of women in Asia Pac are earning more than their partner where they're in a dual career couple.

So I think this is really interesting, and again gets to kind of outdated stereotypes that men are typically the breadwinner. Really what organisations are going to need to make sure they're focused on here is having a really, really solid spousal support program, because long gone are the days where you've got traditional expatriate management with a trailing spouse. This dual career matter is both high for men and women, and this is something that organisations are going to have to have front of mind when it comes to moving talent, no matter their gender in their organisation.

The next again is looking at women with children do not want to undertake international assignments, and this is really interesting. What we saw in the research is that 41 percent of women who are mothers said that they want to undertake international assignments, compared with 40 percent of men who are fathers. So we're seeing almost equal demand for mobility from parents, whether they're mothers or fathers.

But when we look at what happens globally when it comes to those who deploy, only 17 percent are mothers compared to 40 percent being fathers. So we're seeing this demand from fathers being met in reality, while when it comes to women we're seeing big differences. So it's really important that as organisations and decision makers around mobility we're asking ourselves is it the case that women with children don't want to go on assignments, or is it the case that they're just not being offered these positions?

So I think it's absolutely true that there's periods in a mother's career where perhaps she might not be as mobile inclined as she could be at other periods, for example just after having a new baby, but that's going to be the exact same for new fathers. So we need to be very important to make sure that we're not over-associating women with families and under-associating men with the same.

***Abbie Cooke:***

Susie you touched on it earlier about asking for the opportunities. Looking at those barriers, do these findings marry up with the challenges that you faced at ANZ specifically in the Asia Pacific region, and maybe how are you tackling these challenges?

***Susie Babani:***

Yes they do actually. Interesting, all of those reasons given I've seen arise, genuinely and not so genuinely as being reality. I think the first thing is this whole issue about gender diversity being part of your talent program. I think in our case we very much operate on a 50/50 if not why not for all our talent programs. We automatically default to why wouldn't you have a mix, and if you extend that and you say 'your talent program includes getting overseas experience,' it goes without saying that you should have a 50/50 mix on people that get overseas experience because it's a valuable part of development. So the outcome has to be a fairly equal gender approach to expat. It just falls out of having a talent approach.

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Some of the things I think that also help to tackle issues with family, genuine ones or not genuine ones, are making secondments available earlier in people's careers for both genders. There's generally more personal freedom at that time of your life, to go in your 20s and early 30s or when children are very young. But the younger the child the easier and more portable they tend to be. It sets you up well for the future when moving around may be of less interest, again both to men and women. As Aoife said, it's pretty much the same response on the degree to which people with children think they might move.

When you start to get more mature or your family starts to get more mature or your commitments are more mature, we also encourage a lot of short term secondments. So I think they work really well. I think most people think secondment is two or three years, you've got to go away for a long time, disrupt your family, disruption to your dual career partner. But actually I find the three to six month secondments are very worthwhile. People learn a lot. They get a lot of confidence. They are able to bring that knowledge back into the organisation, and they can often do that and deal with being apart from the family for that short period of time without completely disrupting everything. Frankly they're cheaper as well, so there's a plus there too.

Agree with Aoife on the partner and spousal support. We've looked at things like giving dollars to help retraining, to encourage whoever the partner is to retrain, access to computers, Wi-Fi, so that work can be done from home. I think again the growth in technology means it's much easier for more spouses or partners to do their work anywhere any time. So a lot of people do.

Certainly in my own function, and also across the Bank, I was trying to sort of think about how many females with children have actually gone overseas, and I came up with six names without even thinking. Quite a few of them are in HR, but not all of them. One was a country manager, went with two children to Laos, aged two and four, and her husband stayed and worked, ran his business from there. Another one is in compliance in Hong Kong. So I think one of the important things, and we've heard this before, is pick a partner who's actually open minded to this as well. Because I guess the one thing we didn't say is whether it's actually partners that don't want women to sometimes go and take these opportunities, and not just financial. So maybe there are some elephants in the room that we need to also explore.

The reality is that all the people I know that have taken their kids over – and these people have worked in places like Manila and Laos and Hong Kong and India, so some locations that most of them would never have imagined going to in the first place. The reality is childcare is much easier to get access to. It's available, it's cheap, and in many ways even if there was an argument around overall income, I'll bet you the childcare costs are a hell of a lot cheaper when you go to many of these countries that makes up for it. So whether people are looking at total cost or just pure salary when they're making those assumptions, I'm not sure, but I always feel there's more under the surface that you need to explore about why people say no. It's not as obvious as we'd like it to be.

***Abbie Cooke:***

We've talked about a lack of understanding of mobile readiness in employee populations, and it's identified by men, women and global mobility leaders as one of the top barriers for gender inclusive mobility. How do you see that organisations can improve on this?

***Jane Cheung:***

Well I think first of all the organisation should have a fair mobility policy, equal opportunity to both men and women, because in different careers men and women may have different personal needs and career needs. So we should have a fair global mobility policy, and also be transparent to men and women, to the employees.

The organisation should understand the employees' personal needs, because we normally assume female employees won't like to take the mobility, but in reality, once we get the survey for female millennials, more and more female millennials would love to go out on mobility for an assignment. So for the global mobility leaders, they should have a transparent policy and understand what their employees' personal needs are. We always talk about the big data, so instead of – we know each employee's personal details,

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whether they're married, not married, whether they have kids or not. They should also have a knowledge whether the individual would love to take any mobile assignments, which country they're interested, what is their personal goals in terms of their career.

So with all this information put together, the mobility leaders should have a better understanding and pick the right person for the mobility.

***Aoife Flood:***

I think mobile readiness is really important, in particular understanding what it looks like in your organisation. By mobile readiness we mean having an understanding of the talent in your workforce who are willing and ready to go on an assignment.

There's an example at the kind of the opening of the Moving Women with Purpose report where we talk about Susan and Alan, and it's a really interesting example. As I speak about it with organisations across the globe, I always get nodding heads, because it's not a lone exception example, it's happening kind of across the board.

Really what we have is an organisation who in their headquarters location has developed kind of a niche business area, and it's been established for a couple of years, revenues are great, so they've decided they want to be first to market in a new region. There's two rising stars, Susan and Alan, who are identical by tenure, experience, potential, performance, and really the only difference is gender. So when it came to deciding who was going to move to this market to establish this new division, the opportunity was offered to Alan. The reason for that was Susan had just got married, so it was assumed she'd be starting a family soon. Without even discussing it with her, they'd offered the opportunity to Alan.

So Susan was actually very upset when the opportunity wasn't offered to her, and couldn't understand. She'd been informed she was on kind of key talent pipelines, and how had she been overlooked for this opportunity? When she raised it with them, they kind of explained it was too late, 'We've already offered the opportunity to Alan'.

So Susan has since left that organisation, and is actually now working for one of their competitors overseas. Both herself and her husband were very eager to get international experience, and were actually just waiting to get the wedding out of the way so that they could relocate. Meanwhile the opportunity could not have come at a worse time for Alan. His wife was actually ten weeks pregnant at the time that he was asked, but in typical masculine behaviour was very afraid to say no. That might hurt his career if he turned the opportunity down.

So they relocated, but they found the whole experience very difficult. His wife had a very challenging pregnancy, and he found that he wasn't able to give everything that he could in this new location that he was in his home location. Ultimately his assignment was actually cut short. He was brought back to the home firm, and it's slowed his career. So it's had a negative impact on his career. I think that's a real good example of how with the best intentions organisations are making talent decisions to the detriment of their organisation, because they're letting assumptions or unconscious bias influence their decision making.

So in this instance they over-associated Susan with family and children, a family she didn't even have yet, while they over-associated Alan with work and didn't give any kind of consideration to his personal and family circumstance. This is a real example of where having that mobile readiness, understanding who is mobile ready, will mitigate for such examples like that. Because rather than just thinking who's the best for the role, you're looking at the list of names, and there's more than likely going to be less people on that list, female names in particular, that might not have sprung to mind automatically. So I think it's really important that we remember everybody will have both a green or a red light for mobility at certain circumstances in their career, whether they're male or female. Having the understanding of that will make sure that you're focused on getting the right talent to move at the right times in their careers.

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***Susie Babani:***

It's almost like we ask these things at points in time when people go on to talent programs, and whatever the answer that's given at that time is cast in stone for a long, long time. The reality is all our lives are changing all the time, and our yes's and no's may be relevant at a point in time but they are not necessarily relevant later. So I think the best thing – first of all, my advice to women is to always say yes and actually put yourself out there, and wait for the offer to come or an opportunity to come, and then decide whether you want it or not, as opposed to find all the reasons that you better not say yes just in case when the offer comes it's not the right time. I'd say go for it and wait, because that's what most of the guys will do. They'll just say yes and then they'll wait, and then say 'When I said yes I wasn't really interested in going to this location, because there's no schooling and my kids are too old'. 'Okay. Fine. We'll move on to the next person'. It's not a bad thing, but if you say no you're already knocking yourself out of the equation.

Actually a lot of them don't mean no, they mean no, not now, which is a different thing, and I think it's better to actually say yes and have the conversation when the time comes. So I think it's a very valid story Aoife that I've seen happen a lot. It's a question again – and even if both parties have been having children at the same time, it would not be uncommon to assume the mother would be much less likely to go overseas with a young child than the father with a young child, even though they're both parents of young children, because we make those assumptions about primary care giving resting with one party rather than the other.

***Jane Cheung:***

I echo Susie's point that you just cannot assume the mother of the kid is not willing to go versus the father of the kid. So we should give equal opportunities instead of pointing to who should be going, as equal to Aoife's example that we need to listen to their personal thinking, whether they are willing to be put on assignment, instead of the leaders just on one hand they're being appointed to who should be going.

***Abbie Cooke:***

So Aoife you mentioned earlier 22 percent of mobility leaders said they were planning to increase female levels of mobility. So I think this is a good opportunity to talk in more detail Susie about the ANZ Generalist Banker Program. You've mentioned as well that you focus on talent pools of 50/50 which provide equal opportunity for women and men to be considered for the international assignments.

Can you tell us a little bit more about how the Generalist Banker Program focuses on and converges mobility, talent diversity and leadership development, and how you worked to understand the challenges to the barriers perceived by female mobility. Then a second point to that question I suppose, is the approach tailored for different countries and cultures in the region?

***Susie Babani:***

Sure. Just to give a bit of background on the Generalist Banker Program, it's been running for seven years and we basically hire around 12 individuals each year, and part of the proposition is that they are globally mobile. We started this on the basis that we would hire a very culturally diverse group. So we deliberately hire out of Asia, Europe, Australia and New Zealand typically, primarily. We also agreed that we would hire 50/50 if not why not from the start, so we've always hired a mix of male and females from the very start.

Part of the proposition is you will be mobile for at least 15 years, so 15 years of your career. Therefore they are mobile, so they come with that desire for a start. Along the way many of them have had children, both the men and the women that we've hired during that period. That has not stopped them being mobile. We try and apply all our global policies to them like everyone else. So one of the ones we have is that all roles can be done flexibly. Flexible working is something that enables both fathers and mothers to actually manage their work around other commitments, some of which could be children, some of which have got nothing to do with children. But the concept is there that all roles are flexible, regardless of your level, regardless of your gender, and actually regardless of the reason.

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So we apply that very actively, and as a result when some of the people have had children, we might have extended their assignment in the location for six months or a year and sort of delayed a move to the next country, and that works well. It's sort of flexibility on both sides that allows them to get the new family settled and then move on next time round when there's an opportunity. We've been very open to do that, because these are talented people and we recognise that life happens as well. So that's worked quite well.

We've also looked at potential the whole time. So we're always looking at this group as having high potential, and just because there might be periods when they're not as mobile, that's not a problem to us. Most of them are, and most of them would not want – all of them would not be on this program if they couldn't be mobile. They chose to be a Generalist Banker because they really want the opportunity to get a broad range of experiences.

So currently if you look at the region, we have about 64 Generalist Bankers. In Asia we have – what's the number at the moment? It's 15 females, of which 11 are Asian – so just to give you a feel – but also in non-Asian locations we have ten Asian females. So we very actively moved people in and out of their comfort zones, regardless of their gender, so they're operating in different locations. That's another reason why we hire so much across the piece as well.

So it's working very well at the moment. We've retained the vast majority of them, which to me is always the key, and they're progressing well through the organisation. This is a long term investment in talent for men and women.

***Abbie Cooke:***

Amazing proposal to get 15 years of mobility experience from the start of your career.

***Aoife Flood:***

I was just going to add I think the ANZ Generalist Program is just a fantastic example of where an organisation is really getting it right when it comes to converging the talent management, leadership development, mobility and diversity propositions so that they all converge, which is a big challenge for organisations and not something that many are getting all of the boxes ticked just yet. So it's certainly something to aspire to.

What I would say for organisations listening in is perhaps don't be daunted by the 50/50 target. I think the financial services typically is more female dominated, but if you're listening in from the tax sector or from the manufacturing sector, it's not about getting 50/50, it's about having proportionality. So if 30 percent of your workforce is female, those targets might look like 70/30 for you. So just be mindful of the demographics of your own organisation and industry as you start to look to get more alignment between talent, diversity and succession planning.

***Abbie Cooke:***

That's a really good point to make.

Speaking of the ANZ Generalist Banker Program where individuals are earmarked early – so this mobility experience leads us I think into millennials wanting mobility earlier on in their career. When we looked at the statistics of the Asia Pacific region, it was no different to the global statistics in that this is a growing demand for people to have mobility experience within that first six years of their career.

Aoife you've completed a number of PwC surveys and developed thought leadership focused on the millennial generation, of which you are one. Can you talk a bit more about the drivers of this generation in particular, that desire for early mobility in their careers?

***Aoife Flood:***

I think one thing that is particularly clear when it comes to this millennial generation – that's those born between 1980 and 1995 – is that they very much want to work for organisations where they have a clear

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purpose and where they're aligned with their values. I think when it comes to this generation what you see between men and women is actually more commonalities compared to previous generations. But when it comes to women, what you're seeing is more significant differences between the female millennial and their previous generations.

So for example the female millennial is entering the workforce in more significant numbers than any previous generation. They're more highly educated than previous generations, and in fact more highly educated than men in this generation at their level, and they're also more confident and career ambitious than previous generations. So really female millennials are kind of a growing and significant talent pool that organisations can not overlook.

Certainly we see that mobility is top of the agenda for both men and women. Seventy one percent globally said they want to undertake an international assignment, and 86 percent of female millennials and 95 percent of male millennials in Asia Pac said they feel international experience is critical to furthering their career. What's really interesting is that globally women highlighted that mobility is a critical tool to attract and both keep them with an organisation, and this came out even stronger in the Asia Pac market. So 69 percent of women in Asia Pac compared to 64 percent globally said that mobility opportunities were a critical part of a talent brand that would attract them to work for an organisation, and 71 percent said that it was a critical experience that kept them with an employer. So it's really very important for the Asia Pac market.

We're just seeing from the millennial generation in particular a demand for mobility early in their career, typically the first six years of their career. Then what's really interesting is you're almost getting balance responses, so globally and in Asia Pac when it comes also to having mobility experience before having children or before elder care responsibilities. So again I think that's one thing you're seeing with the millennial generation when it comes to men. You're seeing more involvement from them from a family perspective and kind of a move away from kind of the traditional family status where you have the male as the breadwinner and the woman as the homemaker, which I think is really, really interesting.

Early mobility I think is just really critical, not in regards to you're meeting the demand of when talent most want to go on mobility, but also in those first six years of their careers they're less likely to have had a family and much less likely to see so and can't aspire, so stereotypes have an impact on decision making. At PwC we're very focused on early mobility, have been so for about seven years now, and 80 percent of our workforce globally are millennials. So we knew we had to have a decent early mobility program in place to be able to attract and develop and retain this cohort of talent.

What we have seen is that 46 percent of our assignees who deploy below manager level in the first five to six years of their career have consistently been women over that period. It presents a number of benefits. Number one, obviously you're getting more women into these populations, so you're having decisions made when unconscious biases are less likely to have an influence. Number two, you're ultimately creating a pipeline of both men and women who are going to have the right skills to kind of undertake more strategic international assignments later in their careers. So ultimately you're building a pipeline of talent for your future international assignment needs in your organisation.

But I also think it's something Susie touched on earlier on, the factor around repeat mobility and the impact it has just on career decisions full stop. It's undertaking an international assignment early in your career, and it's a big experience, it's a big risk that you're taking, and all of the research points to the fact that women are more risk averse than men when it comes to career decisions and life decisions in general. I think getting these experiences early ultimately sets women up to be less risk averse, because they've kind of taken this chance and they've reaped all the benefits of it.

I know I was only 25 when I undertook my international assignment, and it was quite a daunting experience. Never mind my first time living outside my home country, it was actually my first time living outside of my family home. I was moving into a completely new career role that I'd never had experience in before, and I can remember when I came back from that assignment and completed it that I almost felt career invincible is how I describe it. I said well if I got through that, I can get through anything my career throws at me. I actually think it's moulded me in a way that if I'm not kind of operating outside of my

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comfort zone and constantly challenged, I actually feel quite bored in my career. So it can instil that hunger and start to reduce the risk factor for women. So there's a lot of potential benefits to early mobility when it comes to the larger gender diversity mandate around mobility full stop.

***Susie Babani:***

I might just pick up on a point on those, all of which I agree with. I think from a human resources perspective we're always trying to compete with everyone else for the best talent, and hearing the importance that millennials place on mobility means that if you're an organisation and you have any ability to provide mobility – obviously you're not domestic only – that the ability to provide that and offer it means you're going to get the best people. Given we are in a war for talent and we're all fighting for the best people out there, it starts to become a core value proposition of 'Come and work for us because we will actually provide you with the opportunities to do what you want to do. Because you've told us you want to do it, because we've done all the surveys to find out. Come and join us rather than this company, because we will make that dream a reality'.

So I think it's really important to start – you've got to listen to your potential employees about what they're looking for and design your value proposition around that. So I think that's key as well.

***Abbie Cooke:***

Jane, you started your career in Hong Kong when you were an expatriate, and building on from what Susie said about the value proposition of the organisation attracting millennials and the best talent, what are your local insights in China around the millennial generation and what organisations are doing to provide opportunities and attract the wider talent pool?

***Jane Cheung:***

In China if you speak to other HR specialists in China for other companies, we all agree the demand for mobility for the millennial generation is really high, because as Aoife said during the survey that most millennial people, they prefer to have a mobility assignment in their earlier career. So the demand for mobility in the millennial generation overseas, like from China to any other part of the world, is really high in China. They prefer to go out of China and see the rest of the part of the world – America, Europe, Asia Pacific, any city. They are all willing to go. So we see a large demand for the mobility program, but also on the other hand we see the loss of talent. Because once people are going to the other part of the world, the challenge that the HR people in China are facing is they may never come back, which means they are losing their talent to the other part of the world. So this is the challenge that currently the people here in China are facing.

In terms of mobility for domestic move actually is quite hard compared to if you want to move people internationally. So if we want to move someone from Shanghai to Beijing, it's extremely difficult. So one of the barriers for things like this is because China has a residency registration system, which means you should be only tied to one city, which is your home city. So most people have their roots, and for them to move themselves to the other part of the city, even though it's within China, that means you're going to continue your career in a different part of the city and there's probably no linkage. So the social security system within China, it's not like national wise, it's still on a city by city basis. So people don't want to contribute some of their social security in a different part of the city, and when they return they may have difficulties to withdraw money from the system.

So the domestic move is extremely hard. Even though you chip in housing, you get them allowances, still it's very difficult to move people around. But international move is relatively easy, because people want to – more and more people are still willing to go out of their hometown and see the rest part of the world.

***Susie Babani:***

Jane, I don't think that's only a Chinese phenomenon. We have exactly the same issue moving people between Sydney and Melbourne, let alone out into the country regional areas of Australia. Much easier to move them to China than it is to move from Melbourne to Sydney. While we have none of the excuses of

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social security and so on that you would have in China, it's just often that demand for mobility does tend to be international rather than domestic. We find exactly the same here.

***Abbie Cooke:***

Is there an opportunity to saying the domestic move as a tester to an international movement going forward?

***Susie Babani:***

That's an interesting question. I'm just thinking about that. It hasn't worked terribly well so far I'd have to say. I don't know whether it's the cache, the excitement, the internationalness of going overseas. But people generally have much more fixed views about their own country. Often erroneous, but they have a view about each town and little city and what it's like and whether they want to be in it. You have all the hassle of a move, but without the exciting new bits either, and so I think a lot of people would just rather not do that frankly.

***Abbie Cooke:***

We've touched on the repeat mobility opportunity and that mobility fosters mobility. Susie you've said that your only regret is that you wish you had your first international experience earlier, tying back into what we've just discussed within the first six years. However you've since made up for it with your many moves. One of the findings of the research that mobility does foster mobility is 89 percent of women in Australia, 78 percent of women in China and 80 percent of women in Singapore said that based on their first global mobility experience they would undertake a future assignment.

Can you give examples where you've tapped into this at ANZ to drive greater levels of female mobility?

***Susie Babani:***

Well I certainly talk about my own experience. I'm a baby boomer, I'm not a millennial, so clearly I'm a freak of nature, but I always wanted to work internationally, even as a baby boomer when those opportunities were far less and certainly very, very male dominated when I first started. So yes, I was about 32 when I first went to work overseas, so older than I would recommend these days.

So I often talk about the stories of mine, which were in many countries, including working in China and Canada where I did not have the luxury of look see visits that people get now and little wanders around. I just turned up in these places on Saturday and started work on Monday, and in some of these locations did not know a soul, and in China did not speak Mandarin either just to add. This was ten years ago or 12 years ago where there was a lot less English speaking in Shanghai than there is now.

I think partly it's about thinking about these things as an adventure and an exciting thing, and getting people looking forward to something new. I think the worst kind of expat, male or female, are those that try and create their home country in a new country. There's no point. The whole point of doing this is to learn something, to get out of your comfort zone as Aoife said, to be in an environment where you can't speak the language, or when the food arrives you've got no idea what's on the plate but you've got to eat it because otherwise you're going to go hungry, and I think just to be curious and interested in people.

I've found everywhere I've worked in the world, if you're interested in them, if you ask people questions, people will tell you about the culture, how things get done. I've tried not to assume I know how to do things. Certainly working in Asia in particular I learnt an awful lot about there are many different ways to get things done. I think when you grow up in a western environment you tend to have the loud, domineering, directive male type model actually, frankly, and when you go to Asia and you work in an Asian environment, you realise you can achieve lots of things in very different ways. The outcome is just as good, if not better in some cases, but you don't have to do it one way. I think you can bring that learning back into the western world in particular, and actually do things in different ways with different groups of employees, and there's skills that you learn that you would never learn if you stay in that western construct of what good looks like.

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So I do encourage people to give it a go. Think of it as an adventure. I do encourage people to go for the short term assignments. I do think that's a great way of actually giving people exposure, dipping their toe in the water without making the wholesale move, which is not always possible. Then people do get the bug. Although I have learned to accept that some people, both men and women, are not as excited about working and living abroad as I am. So it's a good thing we're all different I suppose. But I have to accept sometimes that not everybody wants to do this.

There definitely are two groups. I think there are people that do it, say 'That was great. I learnt a lot. I'm glad I'm home,' and there's others that can't wait to move and do other things. Because the other thing you get as an expat I think is you're often a bigger fish in a smaller sea in many cases, and so the experience you get means you dabble in a lot more things, you have much broader responsibilities than you would typically have at head office where everyone's very siloed in their little area of responsibility. That's a good thing, because it really broadens you out, gives you confidence. You start to do things you'd never do. But it's also a challenge on returning people, because what happens is that the business will often want to put them back in their little silo and these people have become much broader and open minded and they think about things differently.

A challenge I think is just to make sure that women and men keep the people at the home country informed of what they're doing, because there is a bit of out of sight out of mind, and people will often assume you're the same person you were when you left three years ago and actually you've matured and learnt an awful lot of things. I really do encourage people on assignments when they are visiting home again to get into the office, meet the people they met with, and if they're not visiting home to do it over Skype, and just keep the business aware of what you're doing so that when it's time to come home your re-entry can be a lot smoother, and that people are appreciating what you've learned and gained and not just assuming you were frozen in time for three years and now you're back again three years later. So it's not just a female issue this one, this is an expat re-entry issue that impacts both parties.

***Abbie Cooke:***

What you talked about there was around the culture of mobility in organisations. You touched on that. Jane, can you give any examples of why creating that culture of mobility is so important in the organisations that you work with in your region?

***Jane Cheung:***

Well as we mentioned, China is actually developing, trying to send more people overseas, which is also encouraged by the Government as their outbound mobility system. So we do see more and more organisations that are trying to create a flexible mobility policy and a transparent one. Because we met with our domestic clients that they planned to send their assignees overseas, and they have no knowledge or no experience previously in order to send their employees overseas so they come to us for help. So first of all they're trying to develop a policy, and second they're trying to identify the right person for them to send overseas.

So they are in the process of developing such mobility policies, and when things are getting more and more mature we think that these companies can develop a more well-rounded policy for their employees, not just gender issues, but also how they can identify the right person to their mobility culture.

The other way on the acceptability, we have a real life example that the company identified a wide talent, which is also a female with a family, and they thought she is the best person to be sent overseas to Europe. But since she has a family, the company actually do ask her whether she's willing to take up this opportunity, and they got a response back yes, that she's willing to take this opportunity. So in terms of the gender, we do see more and more companies having open minded in terms of sending their employees overseas. So these are the trends that we currently see happen in China.

***Abbie Cooke:***

I'd like to talk now about the female role model. The lack of female role models came up as a barrier for males and females. Looking at Asia Pacific, only 54 percent of women in Asia Pacific felt there were

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enough female role models with international experience compared to 73 percent of women who said there was sufficient male role models with international experience.

So Susie you're clearly an amazing example of a female role model with plenty of international experience. Why do you think it is so important that organisations actively role model these experiences for female assignees?

***Susie Babani:***

Well I think you always hear that you can't be what you can't see kind of answer to that question, and I think people like to see other people doing things that they might be a bit nervous about giving a try too. I think therefore it is important that you have female role models, and the more women that we send out as expats to one country – so we have great country managers in places like Thailand and Laos and the Philippines, the UK, the Pacific, Cook Islands, all sorts of places where women, a lot of them with children actually – which I like even better. I don't have children, and I'm sort of conscious that sometimes that being a role model without children people say 'It's easy for you'. It's not always that easy, but people can perceive that. But I have a lot of cases I can point to of women that have made the decision to go to locations that are not always that easy to live in for the experience.

We profile them a lot at ANZ. So we tell stories about these women. We make sure they're interviewed on our intranet sites and that the stories are out there about what they've done, and we ask them to come and talk to other people that are thinking of going overseas. It catches on. It's kind of interesting.

I've got a recent story of a CEO of Laos who's just come back into a bigger job, a frontline job here in Australia, and the person that's replaced her is also a female who was the Chief Risk Officer who was not really thinking of being a country CEO, but she saw how this individual had been successful. She talked to me about it, and she went for it and she got the job. So I think the fact she saw her boss as well actually running the country and getting the support that she needed made her also think 'Well I can do that too'. So the more people you see I think it's fair enough the more people you're likely to believe 'I can make that change and I can take on that role'.

***Aoife Flood:***

I think that's really critical. Completely agree with everything Susie has shared. It's really important I think that organisations, in particular where they have much more male dominated mobility programs, become very familiar with that expression that Susie used – 'You can't be what you can't see'. Even if women are in the minority, I think making a conscious effort to role model the experiences of those women is really critical.

But also as Susie alluded to, I think it's really critical that you're not just role modelling the single female who's gone off to a developed market. It's really critical that you're role modelling a range of assignees, because millennials are going to want to look around them and see people who have these experiences that resonate with them, whether that means having an assignment early in your career or later in your career, whether that means relocating on your own, with a partner, with children, whether it means relocating to an emerging or a developed market, or whether it means relocating on a short term or a longer term assignment. I think that's really critical for both men and for women in your organisation, but I think in particular for those organisations where they do have male dominated programs.

When people are making decisions about mobility, they're just going to be unconsciously conditioned to think men first, and we'll just start to see that continue to permeate where more men are given these opportunities. Where if you've made it very, very visible the successful experiences that women have had in this area, you're starting to infiltrate that mindset and they're starting to see that women are successful in these opportunities also. Ultimately that will have an impact on how decisions are made, but also it will drive more women to wanting these experiences as well.

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**Abbie Cooke:**

Jane, do you identify with a lack of female role models in the region, and as a successful female leader yourself with international experience, how do you see your role in shaping that mobility for future male and female leaders?

**Jane Cheung:**

Actually I do see a lot of strong and successful female leaders in China. Just within PwC itself we do have successful female leaders who originally came from Shanghai and now just retired from a global – our vice-chairwoman in our New York offices. We also have very strong tax leaders who are also female and very successful role models in China, in Shanghai as well. Not just within PwC, but other companies in China we do have strong female leaders.

The important thing is we need to let people know about their story. With amazing technologies nowadays, we can send their stories among LinkedIn, Twitter, our WeChat in China, and as well as internet so that people know about – they're real life stories, and they will be very encouraged to follow their steps, or at least look up on them to influence them to give them ideas in terms of their career. So my experience is I've been working in different countries, different cities, and I will tell people around me that it is – not as much as Susie obviously, but I will tell people how much I can benefit from all these international assignments that gives you different exposures, and you see things differently and your mind can be wide open because you have more tolerance in terms of how you deal with matters and what decisions you can make within your career.

So I think it's a good thing that we should let people know and express all the experiences to our friends, colleagues and people around us.

**Abbie Cooke:**

Great point. Finally I just wanted to touch on location. In the global findings report, Asia Pacific was identified by mobility leaders as one of the most challenging regions to move people into. Susie and Jane, how would you respond to that in regards to attracting talent into the region?

**Jane Cheung:**

For Asia Pacific, I think maybe a few years ago it may be difficult to move, but nowadays I think it's not as hard if you want people to come to Asia Pacific, because I also see people don't want to leave after their assignment has ended.

So maybe it's easier if you want to send people to large cities, but maybe some second and third tier cities they do have some difficulties to send people to, but you still need to offer hardship. But for large cities I see there's a large population of people are willing to come.

**Susie Babani:**

I would agree. I think again this is another one that needs some myth busting. I think having worked in numerous parts of the world, I've actually found being a female in management in Asia much easier than any other parts of the world. That's because actually your gender is irrelevant in Asia much more. If you're a senior person, people are just going to respect you. They're going to assume you're there to do the job, and it's much, much easier to integrate in many ways than it is in the UK or the US or Australia or other places that I've worked. So I think that's a myth.

There are many advantages of working in Asia. The obvious one is tax quite honestly. For many people that's an attractive proposition, and again if you go early on in your career you have the opportunity to actually earn some money and save some that you can then use for down payment on a property if you come to an expensive place like Sydney where you're not going to earn that same kind of money. So there are some financial benefits.

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But I think really there is no reason – in fact there's all the reasons to go to Asia Pacific. I kind of sit here and I think we're in the Asia Pacific century. So of all the regions in the world to be, this is the best place in the world to be for growth, and people in Australia and New Zealand are right in the middle of it and they've got every opportunity to grow their careers by understanding what's going on in Asia, and equally people in Asia can get the western or OECD experience by coming to Australia and New Zealand. It's all happening here, so to not leverage off those opportunities in all directions seems crazy to me. The trade flows go through these locations, so should the people. I think it's absolutely critical that people recognise this as an opportunity. It's a golden era I think for people now to get that international exposure in this region when it's going to be the next century of the greatest growth in the world. So I don't really understand why people wouldn't want to give it a go.

***Abbie Cooke:***

I think it's varied exposure across all the different countries in the region.

***Susie Babani:***

Well that's the other thing, is that I think it's very easy to just say Asia. As of course Jane and all of you will know very well, there is no such place as Asia, there are many, many different countries with many different cultures, many different ways of operating, different levels of development. From a Singapore and a Hong Kong to a Laos and a Cambodia, and just about everything in between, massive cultural differences. Again I think people assume that women are all subdued and not allowed to do things in Asia. That's also untrue. There are differences for sure, and some countries are definitely harder than others and you have to go in with your eyes wide open, but equally there are other countries where I think being a female is an advantage quite often. There's certainly no belief that a man or woman can't do a job as well as one another.

So I think we just have to kind of go for it, and read up and find out the facts and talk to people that have done it. Don't let people put you off.

***Abbie Cooke:***

That's a wonderful thumbs up for this region to finish on I think. We'll just touch back with all of the panel speakers just for some final insights before we finish.

But I think for me the thing that comes through with the research and with the discussions is really that challenging those perceived barriers to female mobility and the unconscious bias that's been in place. I think with the report and with the conversation moving, those barriers are more visible, and organisations are looking within themselves and looking at how those barriers play out in their own organisations, and then being able to translate that into really giving everybody the opportunities and to give those talented individuals as many opportunities as possible to gain international experience.

Jane, have you got closing thoughts?

***Jane Cheung:***

I think just for females to have the chances or better chances for their mobility in the future they should express their ideas, and don't be afraid to speak up. So let people know, because a lot of females, they think they should not express their ideas, they should just follow what was being told. So I think one key thing is they need to be more outspoken and share their ideas and don't be afraid to let people know.

***Abbie Cooke:***

Aoife?

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***Aoife Flood:***

Yes. I think I'll do a call for action for organisations. I think if they want to be getting the best return on investments on their mobility functions, we know mobility is very expensive, and given the makeup of the modern workforce, they need to make sure that their mobility populations also look diverse. So really just to start to make this an integral part of their global mobility strategy planning as they go forward, and begin to build stronger bridges with talent management and diversity leadership as they aim to get the most from their mobility programs.

***Susie Babani:***

So my call to action will be 20 women that might be listening, and I think the call is do it. Do it early on in your career. Get out there. Don't let others put you off. Then as you gain your experience, don't forget to share it with others. Don't forget to encourage other people that come up behind you to do the same thing. Frankly if you've got a bit of spare time, learn how to speak Mandarin. I wish I had.

***Abbie Cooke:***

So thank you for listening to the podcast. We will aim to continue this conversation through the LinkedIn group, and the details of this will be included in the web page from where you've downloaded the podcast.

I want to say a big thank you to the panel, to Susie, to Jane and to Aoife for sharing your insights and your time. Thank you very much.

***Let's talk***

For a deeper discussion of how these issues might affect your business, please contact:

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