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University of
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Australian aid evaluations: performance of Australian aid and Australia Awards scholarships

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The X-Factor

“...going to Australia was life changing it basically changes you completely. So your life never stays the same. So, I think it changed a lot because personally my record was changed, my family I think benefitted, yeah I am really very different person. And of course by the time I finished work I was earning better, almost three times what I used to earn before I went. So that is really significant... So I could support my husband, children go to a good school. That I think is the most significant, as in generally it has not been the same again” (Joyce)

Soft skills and attributes

“you gain confidence after studying outside Uganda. You get something else that people studying here might miss; ... Out there [in Australia] the support you receive is just immense. ...then it builds your confidence and enables you to really believe that, you know, this is something I can do. So in coming back, then your employers can see that this person is confident; feels like they can do it, and they will more and more give you the opportunities to express yourself and try out some of the ideas that you have” (Marie).

Conducive & supportive environment

“...to apply the knowledge and skills you have, you have to have a conducive environment. You have to be in a place where they are open to receiving your skills. So if you’re in a place where they’re a bit rigid, it’s often hard to apply your knowledge and skills. But if you’re in a place where they are flexible and you’re dynamic and they are all about making change, then it’s easy to apply your knowledge and skills. And you need a place where you can grow; where you can get exposed to different professionals. So it’s about the organization where you’re working that gives you those opportunities” (Grace).

Change – You haven't arrived

“I know that it’s very easy for you to study from Australia, get this excellent degree, come back home, that’s the end of it [laughs]. Because, I mean, after that, you may not afford an extra course, you may return to a low paying job and you can’t really develop yourself beyond that. So it would be a good thing to support people, to grow to the highest level. Because, when you return with a master’s degree you, I mean, you haven’t arrived [laughter]. You’re only the middle level career. You haven’t really, you know, arrived; you still need support to reach the highest peak” (Faith).

Cultural expectations

“women felt that the cultural bias against women leaders meant that they had to earn acceptance from men, rather than have it automatically come with a position of seniority: ‘I wouldn't say that female leadership or male leadership are different. But we have to prove to other colleagues that we can lead. Females have to work harder to get to the same point’ (alumna, public sector, Lao PDR). In Samoa, the bestowal of a matai title for most women required their being recognised for considerable efforts and commitment to their family and community, whereas ‘For a man to be bestowed a title ... [said with a laugh] they have to be born’” (technical specialist, Samoa) (ODE, 2015, p. 28)

Double Shift

“As a mother, of course, and as a woman, I think the burden of taking care of the family in our social context lies on the woman. And society...will not understand if a woman has to go on with her career and neglect her children. So as a working mother, you work twice as hard, and it becomes very difficult. So that has impacted on my career, because I think I will be more vibrant, I’ll do much more than I can now, if I didn’t have children to take care of. ...I think we women work harder than men [laughs]. We work much harder than men just to match up with them” (Pricilla).