

'AN EQUAL WORLD IS AN ENABLED WORLD'

Dr Amina Abubakar

First Lady, Niger State Government - Nigeria



INTRODUCTION

A Look at Gender, Health and the Humanitarian in Supply Chain

‘An Equal World is an Enabled World’ is the slogan chosen for International Women’s Day 2020. Taking this as our inspiration, we put eight gender equality-inspired questions to eleven women and one man in positions of leadership and responsibility within the field of Supply Chain Management.

Often, whether post-conflict, post-natural disaster or post-disease outbreak, women and men (and girls and boys) face fundamental challenges and opportunities defined by gender norms, roles and responsibilities. This also affects the Supply Chain cycle, from the planning and allocation of resources and the selection of specific commodities for procurement to distribution and dispensing. All this is compounded by gender segregation, which sees men carry out what is called ‘hard roles’ like warehousing. In contrast, women play ‘soft roles’, for example acting as suppliers at the pharmaceutical level within the various communities. As such, they might not pay attention to the movement of drugs or how each gender benefits from them.

This year’s theme for International Women’s Day could not have been better chosen to allow us to think about the various ways in which gender impacts on Supply Chains. The need for this was well-captured during a recent training session run by the Ethiopia Pharmaceutical Agency (EPSA) Admas Programme which is working to achieve workforce optimization to ensure medicine is available at service distribution points in Ethiopia in order to improve health outcomes, EPSA and the Institute of Health Management Strathmore University Business School on Women’s Leadership. The aim of the training session was to enhance the strategy and action options available to the pharmaceutical industry to increase the number of women in the Supply Chain Management workforce and in leadership jobs. One of the participants observed that, in the absence of a gender policy, the Supply Chain workforce is largely male. Women are concentrated in a narrower range of occupations in lower-grade and less well-paid jobs that are less likely to provide benefits, on-the-job training and opportunities for promotion or to exercise authority or control.

In allowing for diverse perspectives, experiences and voices, gender equality in Supply Chain Management can fundamentally improve the access of clients to quality medical products, vaccines and technologies. Many humanitarian response hotspots occur in rural areas, so there is a need for a constant medicine supply and also for an understanding of community priorities. There is also a need to embrace collaboration and partnerships and to find ways to empower rural women so they can engage effectively with Supply Chain Management.

The questions we asked our interviewees encouraged them to explore their personal feelings about and experiences of equality (or the lack thereof), to reflect on the impact of gender issues on their career and to predict improvements in the Supply Chain Management field for the future. All were strongly encouraging about progress within the health sector and in particularly the Supply Chain industry, although they recognised there is still work to be done before an ‘equal and enabled world’ can be said to have been achieved. The interviewees talked about the qualities that make a good leader and discussed some of the barriers they faced and overcame during their careers. Common themes were the need for women to pursue their dreams, to be passionate about their jobs and to support each other as mentors and role-models.

Ultimately, the interviews draw attention to the advantages as well as the disadvantages of being a woman in a male-dominated field. Supply Chain Management may have a long way to go, but much has been achieved in the last 20 years, and a sense of resilience, determination and optimism comes across strongly through the twelve interviews.

Pamela Awuor Steele

Supply Chain Transformation Director and former CEO,
Pamela Steele Associates Ltd.



By Pamela Awuor Steele

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Dr Amina Abubakar

First Lady, Niger State Government

What does this year's International Women's Day slogan ('An Equal World is an Enabled World') mean to you?

To me, 'An Equal World is an Enabled World' means that the world will be a better place and will function better when everyone is treated the same way, irrespective of gender. Women make up half the world's population but do not have the same opportunities as men. In many societies around the world, women are considered inferior and are not given access to the resources that men are given, which would enable them to be productive members of their societies. In an equal

world, girls and women would have the same rights as men and would be allowed to reach their full potential. This in turn would offer opportunities for societies to develop and sustain that development.

How would you say the sector has evolved since you first started?

Progress towards achieving equality for women has been slow. A lot still needs to be done. We have achieved a few successes and some laws targeting women's rights have been enacted, but implementation of these laws has been abysmal. As such, I would say not much has changed since I started.

'In an equal world, girls and women, would have the same rights as men and would be allowed to reach their full potential.'



What barriers have you faced as a woman in becoming successful in your career? How did you overcome them?

I have to admit that I am one of the lucky ones because I have faced very few barriers in the course of my career. I believe this is because I had educated parents, especially my mother, who placed a high premium on education and made sure I got the best education they could afford. This allowed me to become confident in myself and my abilities so that I was comfortable and able to compete in my field.

What I did find challenging, however, was balancing handling my responsibilities as a wife, mother and doctor. Each of these roles is an equally important and full-time job. Juggling and prioritising these (often conflicting) activities was the biggest challenge to my career. As a result of my responsibilities as a wife and a mother, I missed out on many training opportunities that my male colleagues were able to take advantage of. I had to work extra hard to keep pace with them and, even then, I lagged behind in some areas, especially when promotion opportunities came up. I was, however, able to overcome some of these challenges through improving my time management and by reaching out to others to help them deal with some of the activities/factors that had hindered my working effectively.

What top 3 attributes do you need to succeed?

1. Commitment.
2. Discipline.
3. Integrity.

How important is it for women to lift each other up and what does that mean to you?

It is extremely important for women to lift each other. This is because women everywhere go through the same challenges and understand each other. We can all relate to the difficulties women face, and who better to make us feel good about ourselves than our fellow women? Empathy is a powerful tool that allows us to help each other at the most trying times; only a person who has gone through the same experience can empathise with the challenges women face. The support of the women in my family and circle of friends, who took time out to look after my children whenever I was on call at the hospital, allowed me to concentrate at work so that I didn't make mistakes that might have cost lives. The support of colleagues and mentors who were willing to help out when I needed guidance in a difficult case I was managing helped shape the doctor I am today. So, it means a great deal to me that women should support and help each other to grow.

How do you define a great leader?

A great leader puts the needs of other people before their own. A great leader has a listening ear and looks at what people want and think, not just what he/she thinks is right. A great leader

consults those below them and gives everyone a sense of belonging. Leaders who have good values, which they transmit to those below them, can create a system that sustains itself long after they are gone.

What does a work-life balance look like to you?

A balanced work life is not an exact science. Some days, work takes up most of your time and the home front suffers. On other days, the work suffers and the home front gets the lion's share of your attention. However, if overall you are able to manage your time such that work and other duties are both rather well taken care of most days, then you have achieved a relatively well-balanced work life. The most important thing is to make sure you take care of your health and you must make time for that in your schedule. Without sound health, productivity falls and careers suffer.

What advice would you give young ladies deciding on a career path?

My advice is that they should go for a career that they love and feel passionate about. There are many challenges along the way to success, but doing something you love will make those challenges seem small. It will also make you happy and you will look forward to each day. Sometimes pursuing your passion may not be feasible at a particular point in your life, but it should remain your goal and whatever you do should be aimed at achieving that goal.

Dr Lia Tadesse

State Minister at the Ministry of Health, Ethiopia



What does this year's International Women's Day slogan ('An Equal World is an Enabled World') mean to you?

To me, 'An Equal World is an Enabled World' means intentionally giving attention to one's environment and actively making efforts and decisions to make it equal, thus creating a just and favourable world where every individual enjoys equal rights and participation in power and decision-making structures and is liberated from any discrimination. In an equal world, the efforts of both men and women to make the world a better place are equally recognised, rewarded and celebrated.

How would you say the sector has evolved since you first started?

I started when the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were launched globally—the 'most successful anti-poverty movement in history'—so most of the changes I have seen have resulted to a large extent from the

concerted efforts of governments to achieve the MDGs.

The commitment and effort of the Government of Ethiopia towards primary healthcare-focused and pro-poor health policies and strategies (channelled through four successful health sector development plans and Health Sector Development Programmes, followed by the current transformation plan), coupled with positive socioeconomic development, have had a synergistic effect to achieve better access to healthcare services. Healthcare facilities have expanded tremendously at all levels of the tier system; the health workforce has grown exponentially to address the issue of access. In recent years, the focus on ensuring access has expanded to include quality and developing a strong health system.

Through these efforts, I have seen Ethiopia over the past two decades transform from one of the worst performers in sub-Saharan Africa to one of the top performers. For example, child

mortality has been reduced by more than two-thirds over the past 20 years, and the maternal mortality ratio has been reduced by more than three-quarters. The probability of dying aged between 15 and 60 per 100,000 population (the adult mortality rate) has decreased by more than 42% in females and 47% in men, making Ethiopia one of the six countries that have made top individual gains since 1990.

There has been significant improvement in the involvement of women in healthcare, including improved enrolment of females in medical schools (rising from 5%–10% when I first enrolled to the current level of 35%–40%). However, the growth of women's engagement in healthcare leadership at all levels has been very slow. Ethiopia still ranks high in gender inequality, but it really encourages me to see the changes and the high level leadership commitment to them—for example, 50% of the cabinet now consists of women, and the same can be said of the executive leadership of the Ministry of Health.

What barriers have you faced as a woman in becoming successful in your career? How did you overcome them?

Having been in a leadership role for many years, the most frequent barrier I have encountered is not having enough resources for the many competing priorities. The other barriers are institutional mindsets and structures.

My resilience/determination to do what it takes to make a difference/solve problem for others, my positive mindset and my family support system help me get through those barriers.

What top 3 attributes do you need to succeed?

The vision/desire to impact the world for the better.

Determination to do your best to achieve set goals.

Being a team player: trusting and giving your team an enabling environment to succeed.

How important is it for women to lift each other up and what does that mean to you?

I cannot stress the importance of women lifting each other up enough, because the biggest challenge for every woman is to get support from fellow women. Women in any position need that support system

of being able to rely on each other, not only at times of hardship but also when success seems certain. I would like to stress the value of coaching and mentorship here. For me, 'lifting each other up' means supporting and empowering each other, showing togetherness and enthusiasm for achieving progress in each other's work and also creating safe spaces to be vulnerable when needed.

How do you define a great leader?

For me, a great leader is a listener and team player who gives credit to the team but takes the blame when things go wrong. But a great leader is also a strategic thinker balanced with execution skills.

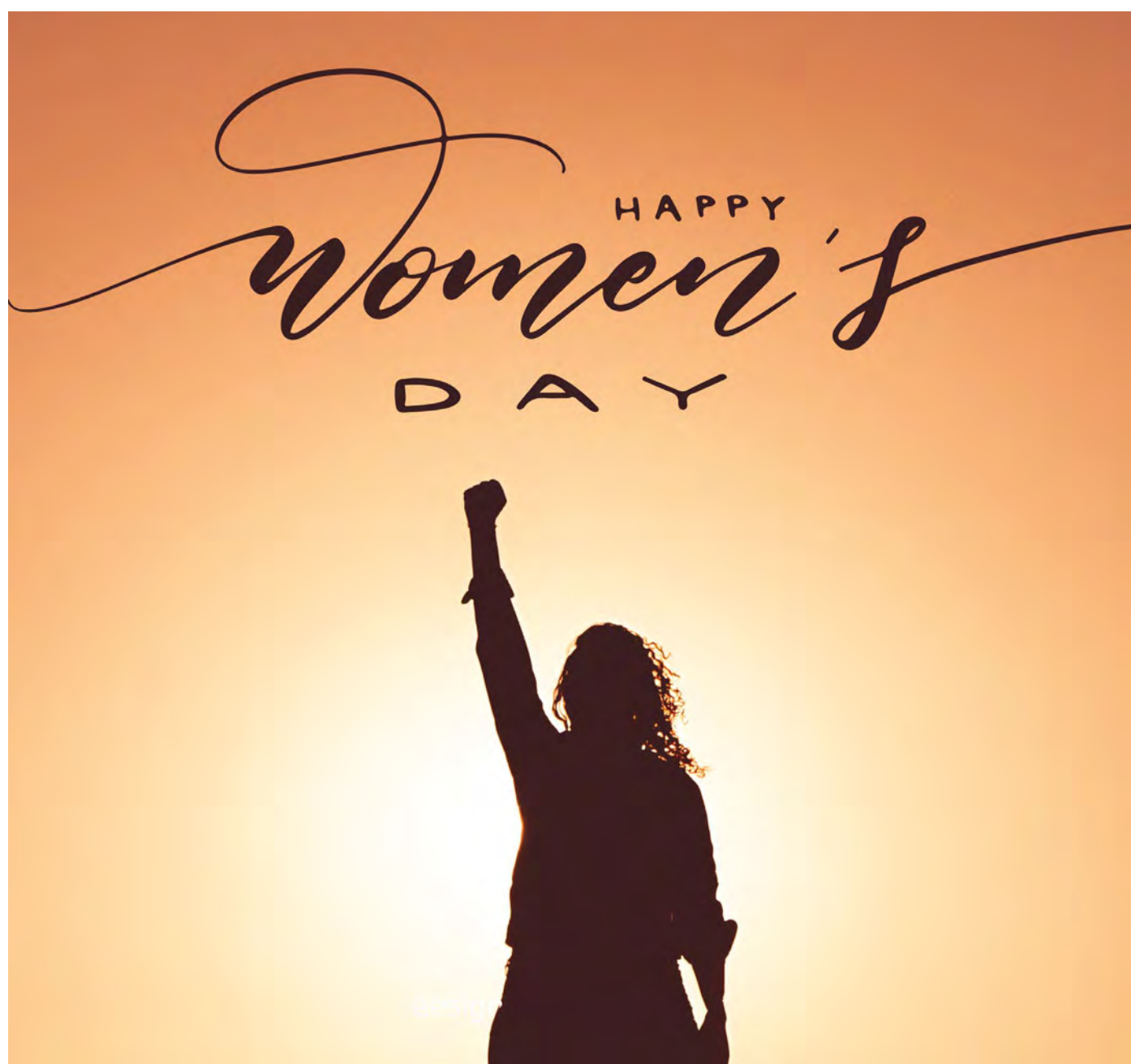
What does a work–life balance look like to you?

Striking a work–life balance is not always the easiest thing to do, but I believe this balance is not only important for physical and emotional wellbeing; it is also important for our

professional and career wellbeing. For me, intentionally carving out time for my family even in the most difficult times is a priority. It keeps me grounded.

What advice would you give young ladies deciding on a career path?

My advice to young ladies is, first, to know what you want (what you are good at and what makes you happy, which may evolve with time—and that is normal) and, second, to be persistent in your learning. Know that every woman has a leader in her. Know your limitations, but more importantly know your strengths. Know when to seek support and never take no for an answer. Always take time to learn and grow; improve the skills necessary to spring upon any opportunities, such as your communication skills, leadership development and emotional intelligence. Lastly, I stress—find a mentor.



Deborah Dull

Principal, Manufacturing Product Manager, GE



What does this year's International Women's Day slogan ('An Equal World is an Enabled World') mean to you?

An enabled world means a world where each person is able to succeed. While we may not all start out from the same place, we must do what we can to remove barriers that stand in front of each other so that everyone has the chance to move forward. Today, women face more barriers. There are no countries in the world where women earn equal pay to their male counterparts. Girls are less likely to be educated than boys in many countries. Equity leading to an enabled environment means the chance to succeed. We must still put in the hard work, and the best we can do for each other is to build an equal world.

How would you say the sector has evolved since you first started?

There are two notable differences. First, the emergence of Supply Chain as a profession in many frontier markets. When I first started in International Development, there was little knowledge of Supply Chain as a discipline and as a science. Working together as a global community, this is changing. The second difference involves the perspectives and values of the generation entering the

workplace right now. They strive for purpose as well as for a paycheck. They challenge their organisations to be good global citizens. Forty percent of them expect to be allowed flexible working locations. The positive part of the internet means that the world is connected. Young people see their global counterparts and the earth more clearly than previous generations did.

What barriers have you faced as a woman in becoming successful in your career? How did you overcome them?

I am often the only woman at meetings, in conference calls, and at board meetings. Women very often face more barriers than men. I have experienced colleagues who have been patronising, discriminatory and sexually harassing. Being 'the only' in a group means a spotlight is shone on us. I have felt pressure to be 'always on', to perform better or to be more eloquent. Overcoming these barriers is all about building bridges. Listening for clues in the language of others can help me understand what's important to them. Sometimes men and other women aren't sure how to engage with me and it's really up to me to build a bridge so that I can move forward in my career.

What top 3 attributes do you need to succeed?

1. Resilience.
2. Grit.
3. Optimism.

How important is it for women to lift each other up and what does that mean to you?

While there have been moments where women have been instrumental in my career, I have been promoted equally by men and by women. Women should seek other women out as mentors and mentees—I also encourage women to get men's perspectives as they build their careers. For women lifting up other women, it's important to watch for how we can help each other. For example, women are interrupted 80% more often than men, both by men AND by women. So when I'm sitting in a meeting and a woman is interrupted, I do my best to speak up and stop the conversation so she can finish her point.

How do you define a great leader?

A great leader looks behind them and has a great following. I think sometimes people get caught up in what it means to be a leader academically, and forget to stop and look around and see if anyone is actually following them.

What does a work-life balance look like to you?

For me, I don't have a work-life balance. It's more like a spectrum. I love what I do, and sometimes I get a great idea on a Tuesday evening or a Saturday afternoon. I believe we bring our whole selves to work, and for me that means my whole work comes with me. While it's important to create the space to recharge and connect with loved ones, I suspect the days of 'nine-to-five at the office' are leaving us as technology allows working hours, locations and formats become more flexible.

What advice would you give young ladies deciding on a career path?

Consider engineering! Supply Chain is considered to be part of engineering. There are not enough women in this field, and engineers will be truly critical as we solve the great problems facing this next generation (climate change, resource shortages, the future of food, etc.). Be kind to one another and be kind to yourself. Give yourself the space to make mistakes and learn. Consider your 'failures' to be investments in learning.



Eva Mwai

Regional Director, East Africa, North Star Alliance (Kenya)

What does this year's International Women's Day slogan ('An Equal World is an Enabled World') mean to you?

The world cannot thrive in an environment where equality is compromised. Equality enables people to access different opportunities despite their station in society. Women in particular have been denied freedom and opportunities for a long time. Although the situation is changing gradually, we still have a long way to go. Empowering women is indispensable for cultivating development and reducing poverty. Empowered women contribute to the productivity of whole families, to communities and to improved prospects for the next generation.

The slogan means a great deal to me. It speaks to my dreams and aspirations—to see an equal world where women live in dignity. Where women can be educated and grow their careers. Where a high percentage of women take top leadership positions in global companies. Where women access healthcare and exploit resources to grow economies.

The slogan reminds me that I have a role in creating an equal world.

How would you say the sector has evolved since you first started?

The transport logistics sector was largely

dominated by men when I first started. The rough terrain, odd working hours and insecurity were among the aspects discouraging women from joining. More women have joined since then and are doing amazing work.

What barriers have you faced as a woman in becoming successful in your career? How did you overcome them?

Sometimes, I have had to work twice as hard to prove I have the capacity. Juggling work and family is the other challenge.

What top 3 attributes do you need to succeed?

1. Resilience.
2. Respect for people.
3. Determination.

How important is it for women to lift each other up and what does that mean to you?

Extremely important. We need one another to excel.

Women lifting each other means creating opportunities for them. Starting with my workplace, I should identify talent and reward women. I should play the role of a mentor and coach and ensure they develop.

How do you define a great leader?

A great leader, in my opinion, is people-oriented. Such a leader embraces everyone. A great leader inspires teams to grow and to develop. A great leader walks with the team. As the African proverb states: 'If you want to walk fast, walk alone. But if you want to walk far, walk together.'

What does a work-life balance look like to you?

I try to maintain a healthy work-life balance, but there are times I over-stretch and neglect important aspects in my life such as exercise and spending adequate time with my family.

Delegating, proper planning and prioritisation helps me keep focused.

At times I have to make a deliberate decision to relax and give myself 'me time'.

What advice would you give young ladies deciding on a career path?

Young ladies deciding on a career path ought to follow their passion. They should never allow anyone to discourage them from what they love doing just because they are women.

Ladies—get into your field of choice with confidence. Work hard and prove naysayers wrong. You will only excel and enjoy the career path you are passionate about.

'Women in particular have been denied freedom and opportunities for a long time. Although the situation is changing gradually, we still have a long way to go. Empowering women is indispensable.'

Dominique Zwinkels

Executive Manager, People That Deliver



What does this year's International Women's Day slogan ('An Equal World is an Enabled World') mean to you?

To me, it means we have the power and the means to overcome any obstacles together.

How would you say the sector has evolved since you first started?

The sector has evolved a bit since I first started working in Supply Chain Management in 2007 and I would love to see it evolve even more. The problem I see is that many organisations still very much hold traditional gender roles. Many organisations predominately have men in their mid-to-upper level Supply Chain Management staff positions. I am seeing more women in leadership roles, which I am excited about, but women are often still not hired for safety and security reasons and the notion that women cannot manage this type of work. Women tend to work in the areas of finance, procurement and customs clearance. I believe we need to move away from these institutional mindsets and stereotypical roles in society so we can have more women leaders in Supply Chain Management. But how do we do

that?

What barriers have you faced as a woman in becoming successful in your career? How did you overcome them?

My main barrier has always been workplace flexibility and having a work-life balance. When I decided to start a family, my children became my priority in life. However, I have always had an enormous drive to succeed in my career. I therefore took different part-time and flexible work arrangements when my children were young. I was fortunate to have these options, but I also worked hard to create them, and I feel that sometimes I am still trying to catch up from those years.

What top 3 attributes do you need to succeed?

Know who you are and what you want to do; that will give you the positive energy you need to succeed.

Learn how to communicate well—it makes all the difference.

Gain trust with the people you work with, meet your deadlines and always keep your promises.

How important is it for women to

lift each other up and what does that mean to you?

It is very important for women to lift each other up, as we depend on each other and we should not see one another as competitors or threats. We need to encourage and support one another so we can all find the success we are looking for.

How do you define a great leader?

The dictionary says that leadership is the art of influencing and guiding a group of people to act towards achieving a common goal. A great leader helps others grow. I like this quote from Maya Angelou: 'I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.'

What does a work-life balance look like to you?

For me, a work-life balance is finding that equilibrium in my personal, professional and family life that means finding time during the day to work, be with my family and have an hour of 'me time'!

'I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.'
Maya Angelou

What advice would you give young ladies deciding on a career path?

Advice I wish I had been given is—whatever job you do in Supply Chain Management, do it well. That will get you recognised. Do not be afraid to speak up in meetings. Even if you are the most junior person, if you are asked what you think, throw your ideas out there. If there are special projects that will get you visibility outside your role, volunteer and try to lead those activities.

Dr Kalkidan Lakew

*Deputy Director General, Systems Strengthening,
Ethiopian Pharmaceutical Supplies Agency*



What does this year's International Women's Day slogan ('An Equal World is an Enabled World') mean to you?

To create the world we all want to see whereby each individual is enabled to achieve any goals, it is necessary to close the gender gap and create an equal world. For me and for all of us, it is a reminder that creating equality is a mandatory step towards the goal and priority action that needs to be addressed.

How would you say the sector has evolved since you first started?

I am very optimistic about the positive trend being recorded in achieving gender equality within the health sector. Even if there is a lot left to be accomplished, the fact that more women are coming to leadership positions and taking on more significant roles within the sector shows we are on the right track. Many initiatives are being carried out, from advocacy of gender equality to creating a safer place for health professionals and clients; these are commendable and need to be strengthened.

What barriers have you faced as a woman in becoming successful in your career? How did you overcome

them?

I can't say I have faced any significant barrier in my career to get to where I am due to my gender. I am lucky enough to say that I have great family, friends and colleagues who support me in every aspect of my career. However, I notice now and then that people place less emphasis on what I have to say or sometimes tend not to take me seriously, especially considering my age and experience in the field. But I have never let that hold me back or discourage me.

Additionally, I have experienced some manifestations of imposter syndrome that I have struggled to overcome, which I believe is common among women. I find myself giving myself very low credit and recognition and also find it difficult to accept any appreciation of me or of my work. I am trying to overcome this through self-reflection and separating feelings from facts.

What top 3 attributes do you need to succeed?

1. Drive.
2. Self-efficacy.
3. Habit.

How important is it for women to lift each other up and what does that mean to you?

It is very important that women should lift each other up and support each other. What it means to me is women supporting each other to overthrow the status quo and become each other's keepers. It is crucial to have such support in working towards the enabled world we all aspire to see. I find it inspiring, motivating and comforting to establish such a bond. I have had a group of female friends for more than a decade that gives me the support and comfort I need to keep me uplifted. Similarly, at work and in a professional aspect, I find it easier to work with, share experiences with and learn from other women through supporting each other. This collaboration is crucial to collectively close the gender gap and create an equal world.

How do you define a great leader?

I believe a great leader should be a role model and exemplary. I strongly believe in role modelling and its impact on people. It is necessary to practise what one preaches. A great leader should also be a motivator, someone people go to for inspiration and to re-connect with the overall vision.

What does a work-life balance look like to you?

For me, it is more about time management and choosing priorities. It is very necessary to give oneself a break to self-reflect, have a social life and explore the world beyond work. I try to create that balance and to give myself appropriate time for each, even if there are some challenging scenarios. I am yet to establish my own family, which will require strong balance and may need an adjustment to my current lifestyle.

What advice would you give young ladies deciding on a career path?

It is important to have faith in themselves and to prepare themselves for the next big challenge. It is also crucial to remain open to explore and grasp any opportunities they may come across. They shouldn't be afraid to take a risk, make mistakes or even potentially fail (but never regret). They should know it is OK to be confused and that it is not mandatory to figure everything out in a moment. It also helps to have role models and mentors to inspire and learn from. My final message is: there is no right career path. Just choose a path that sparks a light in you and be driven by your passion, no matter what; the rest will follow.

Phoebe Kung'u

Regional Supply Chain Director, East Africa International Rescue Committee



What does this year's International Women's Day slogan ('An Equal World is an Enabled World') mean to you?

As an individual, I am responsible for my own thoughts and actions, which means I have a choice to fight bias, broaden perceptions and improve situations that celebrate women's development and achievements.

How would you say the sector has evolved since you first started?

Historically, the Logistics and Supply Chain Management industry have been male-dominated, which makes it difficult for women employees to find a foothold. In the commercial sector, only 25% of manager positions are held by women; this drops to 15% in more senior roles. In the humanitarian sector, the numbers are similarly disappointing.

It's worth saying here that the adoption of technology in Supply Chain has enabled end-to-end visibility of goods and services, making procurement, warehousing and transportation that much more efficient and cost-effective. This fusion of technology with Supply Chain is overturning the traditional

male dominance; women are now taking over more work in Supply Chain. Even so, there are very few managers or senior leaders in humanitarian logistics.

What barriers have you faced as a woman in becoming successful in your career? How did you overcome them?

The perception of others that Supply Chain is a male job has led to me being overlooked for senior positions in the past. I have had to work harder and make deliberate efforts to be seen and heard as adding value and being fit for my role. In another organisation, there was this invisible glass ceiling; as a 'national staff' member, I wasn't considered for international positions that would have helped in my career development, despite the fact I had proven myself worthy of consideration. I was determined to grow my career and that organisation turned out not to be the best fit for me, so I made a choice to look elsewhere and it paid off! I have also had to make sacrifices in my work-life balance in past years, juggling work and being a single parent. Many women find themselves faced with the dilemma of either looking after their family or progressing with their careers. Many organisations have realised that having a work-life balance

is not just a female thing ... A 'family-first' attitude will go a long way towards improving the participation of women in Supply Chain.

What top 3 attributes do you need to succeed?

First, I think the change needs to start with us and our mindset of 'what a man can do, a woman can do it better' ... literally!

I encourage women to be brave and bold in their quest for success. (Please don't get me wrong—I don't mean that women should wear male armour or adopt an aggressive and male persona so that we can beat the male folk at their own game ... that would just be counterproductive!)

Overall, success does not come on a silver platter, it is earned. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that women should have a vision, which then translates into a career plan and actualisation of that plan. This might be through gaining more knowledge in the technical area of Supply Chain, being brave and taking on projects they can learn from or managing their own brand (who they are).

How important is it for women to lift each other up and what does that mean to you?

I think women leaders need to be more visible and act as role models and mentors to others. Their success stories need to be talked about to attract more women. If we are in a position to influence more diverse and inclusive cultures, then we should do so.

How do you define a great leader?

I would say a great leader inspires others to do great things.

What does a work-life balance look like to you?

Humanitarian work is fast-paced and I always have to be careful not to burn out. Therefore, I deliberately make time for activities and people that matter most to me. It not only helps me re-energise; it also gives me an opportunity to clear my head and ultimately do a better job.

What advice would you give young ladies deciding on a career path?

Based on the fact that there are few women in humanitarian Supply Chain today, many organisations have made commitments to strive for gender equality. Women have a voice; more opportunities to attract, recruit and retain women practitioners exist today than they ever did before. If you have a passion for it, then I do not see why you wouldn't get a chance to practise and excel.

Jenny Froome

Chief Operating Officer, SAPICS



What does this year's International Women's Day slogan ('An Equal World is an Enabled World') mean to you?

It is relevant and challenging. If everyone understands their self-worth without a sense of inequality, we can all focus on the skillsets we can bring to the table to make the world a better place. True equality is what we must focus on, however—by empowering women, we must not disempower men. EQUAL is the word we must keep at the forefront of our minds.

How would you say the sector has evolved since you first started?

Enormously. Seeing so many strong and skilled women in the profession now is hugely motivational. At the first

conference I managed for SAPICS in 1996, there were hardly any women who were senior Supply Chain executives in attendance. The number of female speakers was marginal. Now our programme features senior Supply Chain executives who are women, a panel discussion dedicated to women in Supply Chain Management and a large number of women Supply Chain professionals attending as delegates—although not quite 50/50, we are getting there. We have a way to go in our diversity of speakers at our conferences, though. We need to keep working on that at many levels. Our membership of SAPICS is rewardingly diverse but there is still a great deal of work to be done. SAPICS has been fortunate to have had three strong women lead the association over the last 10 years.

'We have a way to go in our diversity of speakers at our conferences, though. We need to keep working on that at many levels.'

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It is exceptionally important for women to lift each other up—but I do not agree that just because you are a woman you should be given an advantage. You have to prove that you are capable of the job. I cannot abide the online armchair critics who pass judgement on working mothers or women who have chosen to stay at home to raise their families. Personal choice should be just that—personal.

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That is something we are very proud of and not many Supply Chain associations around the world can boast this. Tracy Cheetham, Liezl Smith and our current President (Chair) Keabetswe Mpane are all exceptional Supply Chain practitioners who are intensely proud and passionate about the Supply Chain profession. Our Board of Directors has also reflected the change in demographics and this is constantly evolving.

What barriers have you faced as a woman in becoming successful in your career? How did you overcome them?

I never really set out to have this career, so I cannot really identify any real barriers as I have never had a main goal to achieve. As the profession has evolved, so has SAPICS and so has my career. I was educated in the UK and spent the first five years of my working life in London. When I moved to South Africa and started working, I was very surprised at the different ways in which women were treated. There were very few women in senior positions. There was very obvious inequality. While there is still a lot of change to achieve, we have come a very long way.

What top 3 attributes do you need to succeed?

Hard work—nothing comes without hard work; anyone who thinks otherwise is misguided.

Good communication skills are of paramount importance to ensure good relationships and to get the message across effectively.

Tolerance (but not too much!) and **kindness** (I know that's 4!)—we have to be more tolerant of each other and kind to each other. Courtesy costs

nothing.

How important is it for women to lift each other up and what does that mean to you?

It is exceptionally important for women to lift each other up—but I do not agree that just because you are a woman you should be given an advantage. You have to prove that you are capable of the job. I cannot abide the online armchair critics who pass judgement on working mothers or women who have chosen to stay at home to raise their families. Personal choice should be just that—personal.

How do you define a great leader?

Someone who can bring out the best in you without you even knowing that is what they are doing. Someone who makes you believe in your ability even when you don't and pushes and encourages you along the way.

What does a work-life balance look like to you?

I am completely the wrong person to ask this question. When I work it out I will let you know! I know it's hugely important to try to establish this, but throughout my career it has been very hard to achieve.

What advice would you give young ladies deciding on a career path?

If you choose something that you really enjoy doing and that you are passionate about, then it is not a job—it is a way of life. Grab every opportunity that presents itself to you and push yourself out of your comfort zone. Education is not just found in textbooks. We don't all have to be the best at everything. It is OK to fail sometimes – that is how we learn. Absolute perfection is not attainable. You are enough. Try to surround yourself with positive people who are passionate about what they do and want to do it to the best of their ability and it will rub off on you!



SAPICS Leadership Team

Azuka Okeke

Regional Director, Africa Resource Centre (ARC)



What does this year's International Women's Day slogan ('An Equal World is an Enabled World') mean to you?

For me, this year's slogan means we should focus on celebrating women, women who have been instrumental in improving the welfare of other women and children. The issue of celebrating women is very important as there is a need to showcase how women are playing key roles that impact change. For me in the ARC, women who have impacted lives from the community level to the top governance level should be celebrated. Another focus should be to target the issue of mentorship. How do we set up structures to facilitate mentorships for women in the global

health space in Africa? International Women's Day should make this a call for action.

How would you say the sector has evolved since you first started?

I believe 2019 was a great year for women. We had platforms that gave women the voice to speak and we are seeing women in Africa speak strongly about issues that address equality, violence and health. Things have improved significantly regarding our ability to voice our thoughts. However, men still dominate in leadership positions where women's leadership might have given more room for impact, e.g. the Public Health Supply Chain area. Our voice is important,

but we should be allowed to be in positions of leadership where we can drive action for change.

What barriers have you faced as a woman in becoming successful in your career? How did you overcome them?

I have been privileged to lead the ARC in Nigeria and to support other ARCs in Africa. This has enabled me to be in a strategic position for decision-making. One key thing I see as a woman in a leadership position in this era is that we are heard but we are not really being listened to. The trend seems to be to promote women leadership as per gender equality in the corporate world. It looks good for companies but does not always translate to the leadership affecting company operations, particularly when it comes to making decisions for impact. Women need to be heard and in addition be listened to.

I use an evidence-based approach to make a case to be listened to. I set up achievable milestones and, following each period, I use my achievements to speak. I believe in showcasing my successes and learning to lend credibility to my voice.

What top 3 attributes do you need to succeed?

Honesty and integrity—as someone in the development sector, I believe one must build credibility to sustain support (grants and financial aid). Be the person showing consistent accountability as proof of integrity. Do what you say you will do, in the right way, at the right time and with the right people. Be trustworthy.

Be a decision-maker—be bold to suggest ideas and be open to fail. Learn from your mistakes and make decisions again. We need more women who are bold and courageous to bring up ideas, to work with people to clarify those ideas and to test and scale those ideas.

Humility—as we succeed, we must become humbler. Humility makes a good leader. Women in leadership positions must ensure that they appraise themselves based on their humility rather than just based on impact. No one becomes a great success working alone. We succeed with people. Humility is a success magnet. It draws passionate and committed people to you.

How important is it for women to lift each other up and what does that mean to you?

We need more women role models. In Nigeria, many young women identify themselves with women in the entertainment industries because those are the women they see and relate to. Right now, more so than before, women leaders must purposively reach out to younger generations to become role models. I use social media platforms a lot to preach about Supply Chain work in Nigeria. As a woman in Supply Chain work, social media has kept me visible to the younger generation and has made the profession relatable to more women. We must look at the generation we want to uplift and find practical ways to engage them.

How do you define a great leader?

A great leader clarifies a vision and objectives in a manner that will inspire others and encourage others to build and

We need more women role models. In Nigeria, many young women identify themselves with women in the entertainment industries because those are the women they see and relate to. Right now, more so than before, women leaders must purposively reach out to younger generations to become role models.

support that vision. There is always a built-up structure or system that speaks of great leadership even years after the leader is no more.

What does a work–life balance look like to you?

Family before work! Love your job so you don't see it as work. Create an environment of love even at work so the office is a place filled with laughter. Health first. Try having a vacation (I need to do this actually).

What advice would you give young ladies deciding on a career path?

My first advice would be to start early in doing their research. They should also do some practical things while in high school and at university, such as utilising their holiday period to get some work experience. They should work in areas of interest so they can use first-hand experience to funnel through their career choices. They should seek out those who have succeeded in those careers and find out what they did. I, for instance, will seek out an African woman who is married with children so I can ask questions beyond the career itself and understand the work–life balance aspect of that career.



Alexis Strader

Project Officer, People that Deliver Initiative, UNICEF Supply Division

What does this year's International Women's Day slogan ('An Equal World is an Enabled World') mean to you?

To me it means you can't have an equitable world without ensuring equal access to the tools and resources needed for success.

How would you say the sector has evolved since you first started?

I started working in Health Supply Chains seven years ago. During those seven years, I've noticed two big changes. The first was breaking down the private/public sector barrier. There has finally been recognition that we will not strengthen Health Supply Chains if we continue to believe there is a hard division between the public and the private. In fact, as one colleague pointed out, it's a self-created division that causes more problems than it solves. The second change is related to the first. Collaboration is increasing among the key players working in Health Supply

Chains. We still have a long way to go in terms of collaboration, but we are making great strides in discouraging competition and instead bringing together financing and expertise to accelerate change. We need to do better about coordinating activities, and I hope that happens soon.

What barriers have you faced as a woman in becoming successful in your career? How did you overcome them?

It's hard to know if I faced a barrier because of my gender or for another reason. For any barrier I face I've sought the support of family, friends, mentors and trusted colleagues. One of the best pieces of advice I ever got was 'Don't be afraid to ask for help when you need it.'

What top 3 attributes do you need to succeed?

Empathy—putting yourself in other people's shoes, understanding other

peoples' points of view, recognising that the whole world doesn't revolve around you or your problems.

Humility—understanding that you're not always right, that you will make mistakes, and that you can't know everything.

Accountability—owning your work and feeling responsibility for the quality of the results you produce; doing your best to ensure that your work has a positive impact, even if it means causing conflict or having difficult conversations.

How important is it for women to lift each other up and what does that mean to you?

It is essential for women to lift each other up. In my culture there is a tendency towards competitiveness in professional environments. I once read that competitiveness among women in the workplace occurs because there are fewer senior-level positions for women, so the women are pitted against each other



for those coveted spots. This is sad on so many levels. I really see this as a major barrier to organisational and individual success. We know it's harder for women to reach higher levels in an organisation; I think if we supported each other instead of competing against each other there would be more women at the top. Most of my mentors were men because I couldn't find women willing to mentor me. For me, lifting other women up means never saying no to an opportunity to mentor or to give advice to others. Don't be afraid to ask for mentorship and do whatever it takes to make time to mentor others. Women often deal with the 'double burden' of full-time work and full-time household work, so I understand it's difficult to make time for mentorship, but mentorship doesn't necessarily mean a huge time commitment; a 15-minute conversation could make an enormous impact on someone's professional development.

How do you define a great leader?

A great leader trusts their team. A great leader sets an example for their team by encouraging a work-life balance, by encouraging staff to work on projects

that interest them and by being invested in the success and development of each of their team members. A great leader is committed to diversity. A great leader spends more time listening than speaking. A great leader is open, honest and approachable.

What does a work-life balance look like to you?

I think a work-life balance is extremely important, but I have a hard time 'practising what I preach'. This is exacerbated by the fact that colleagues often assume that, because I don't have children, I am OK with working outside normal business hours. Shockingly, in the past I have even had colleagues delegate additional work to me instead of another colleague because I had 'more free time' than other colleagues with children. I felt this was unfair. Personal time should be respected, no matter what. If I was not constrained by workplace norms and culture, a work-life balance to me would be being able to work from any location and make my own schedule. I believe that, as long as a person gets their work done and participates in required meetings, they

should be allowed to work where they want, when they want.

What advice would you give young ladies deciding on a career path?

Choose work that has meaning for you, that you feel excited about. I recognise not everyone has the luxury of choosing their career path, but if you do, make sure it's deliberate. Do your homework, talk to people, do an internship if you can. Learn as much as you can before you commit to a particular career.

Always maintain your professional integrity. No matter which path you choose, do it well and do it with integrity. At the end of the day your reputation precedes you, so make sure it's a good one.

Make sure you have your 'squad' of supportive friends. The group can consist of colleagues, but not necessarily. The squad should be a group of people you trust that you can turn to when you need advice and who understand the sector in which you work. Among my squad we share books, podcasts and job openings; we get feedback on our resumes, bounce off ideas, etc.



Rosemary Okello-Orlale

*Director, Africa
Media Hub*

What does this year's International Women's Day slogan ('An Equal World is an Enabled World') mean to you?

The theme for this year's IWD (2020) is 'Enabled World'. In for's it is translated as 'Each for Equal has a lot of meaning. But for me, it means that gender equality is everyone's gain.

How would you say the sector has evolved since you first started?

Since the struggle for gender equality many years ago and the Women's Decade (1975–1985), with the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995, the report on Women's Supply Chain Participation and Leadership in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa reveals that the gender make-up in the pharmacy profession is influenced by the number of women working in warehousing, distribution, forecasting and supply planning related to Health Supply Chains.

What barriers have you faced as a woman in becoming successful in your career? How did you overcome them?

One major barrier that women face in any career is gender stereotypes. These exist in every society, whether in the most developed countries or in a less developed country. Even though many countries address these barriers through gender policy and gender mainstreaming framework, as well as by creating the institutions and machinery to address gender inequality, an imbalance in gender equality still exists in many areas, including leadership.

What top 3 attributes do you need to succeed?

The top 3 attributes for success in addressing gender equality where society is enabled to have an equal say are:

- 1. Explicit policies and mandated targets that frame gender equality as good for everyone.*
- 2. Training and capacity development.*
- 3. Financial support.*

How important is it for women to lift each other up and what does that mean to you?

Women can lift each other by creating a network to share and learn from one

another and mentor each other, as well as by sharing their knowledge and experience. But they can also change the narrative that gender equality is about fixing men.

How do you define a great leader?

The term 'a good leader' is relative and it depends on how one chooses to look at it. Generally, however, a good leader should be like the one described by Joshua Porcelli: a senior strategist and founder is not always in charge, but takes care of the people in his/her charge.

What does a work-life balance look like to you?

To me, a work-life balance means having a workplace where I can meet both my personal and my family responsibilities without penalty.

What advice would you give young ladies deciding on a career path?

Despite the new opportunities offered by the Fourth Industrial Revolution, gender policy is critical, not only in addressing sexual harassment but also in ensuring that there is a fair and equitable workplace with a committed leadership that gives women and men equal rights.



Pharm Linus Odoemene

Supply Chain Strategist

What does this year's International Women's Day slogan ('An Equal World is an Enabled World') mean to you?

It means an opportunity to unlock the great potential in women.

What barriers have you faced, as a woman, in becoming successful in your career?

I am not a woman; however, I can hazard some guesses. Women face barriers related to:

- culture;
- society;
- family size;
- nuclear family.

How did you overcome them?

Often, women only escape from the shackles of cultural or social constraints by chance—their family of birth, society at large or their family by marriage. Thus, depending on circumstances, many women still have to manoeuvre their way out of these strongholds to express their potential. Nature also places responsibilities on women.

Women should remember that many

constraints have their greatest impact between early childhood and the early part of middle life. Keeping this in mind, young women, in pursuing their life dreams, should be flexible enough to choose careers and pursue them in a way that will allow them more time in the early part of middle age when the survival of family and the quality of family outcomes depend on them.

What top 3 attributes do you need to succeed?

- Knowledgeability.
- Multi-tasking, which includes resilience and a soft but unyielding attitude.
- A passionate pursuit of selfless service to humanity.

How important is it for women to lift each other up and what does that mean to you?

This will give women confidence and the knowledge that they, too, can succeed (role-modelling is crucial).

This requires access to information, resources and other support.

How do you define a great leader?

Great leadership comes with many

known attributes; however, to be practical enough, a great leader demonstrates the capacity to break long-standing barriers and create a new order for others to maintain or emulate.

For instance, my country has struggled with one or two challenges since I was a child; he is a great leader who can overcome those. Pamela Steele pioneered Supply Chain evangelism in some state ministries in Nigeria and set a new standard for Supply Chain Transformation. That's a great leadership example coming from an otherwise culturally encumbered African woman.

What does a work–life balance look like to you?

For women, the balance is more about releasing time to take care of family obligations. It is not much about playing polo, watching movies or socialising with friends.

In general, the concept applies only to those who 'work'. Where passion and job meet, this is not work, or rather it is work that needs little or no balancing.

For me as a person, creating new things in Supply Chain is not work; it is leisure and does not need balancing. I have worked for decades in this field within the ministry without taking annual leave once, because I never felt stressed. Technical Adventure is fun even if the jungle is in your home or office room.

What advice would you give young ladies deciding on a career path?

In choosing their career, they should be flexible enough to balance the way they pursue their life's ambitions with those hard-to-avoid family/social obligations.

As a woman, do not sacrifice your life's ambition, but the way you fit it into your early and later family life matters.

'For women, the balance is more about releasing time to take care of family obligations.'

Produced by:



Pamela Steele Associates (PSA) is a niche management consultancy with a mission to ensure that no patient in low- and middle-income countries suffers due to lack of essential medicine. We specialise in Supply Chain Transformation for the public health & humanitarian sectors through consultancy, research and training.

PSA was founded in 2013 by Pamela Steele. It has headquarters in Oxford, UK and regional offices in Ethiopia, Kenya and Nigeria.

We provide sustainable solutions for the development of the in-country capacity of individuals and organisations to reduce dependency on external support. Working with governments, International Non-Governmental Organisations and the United Nations, we Research, Train and provide Technical Assistance, deploying technical specialists to transform health and humanitarian supply chains in collaboration with client teams.