

## IHRM Case study: From Munich to Mohali

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Maria Liese, a senior business manager in the Munich office of a German MNC, was given a three year assignment in the Mohali (India) operations of the company. The MNC started its Indian operations in 2013. Maria was unmarried and had no liabilities back home. As such, she thought that it was a good career opportunity for her. She felt that getting some international management experience would improve her prospects for a promotion after her return from this foreign assignment. However, after she arrived, she found that she was not fully prepared for the many challenges she faced and wondered how best to deal with the situation. Initially she felt overwhelmed because her company's Munich and Mohali offices had not assisted her much during the process of transition.

As an expatriate woman relocating all by herself, Maria was very concerned about her personal safety in India, especially because of some prominent incidents of crimes against women in New Delhi and Mumbai, widely reported in the international media. She knew that as part of her contract, there would be no problem with housing security as her company would arrange for her a suitable house/flat in one of the safest and posh localities in Mohali. However, she was worried about how she should dress at work and during her free time, and especially, how others (including her colleagues) might perceive her. Because she was single, she was also concerned about her social life, leisure activities and making new friends in India. In the professional context, Maria felt that the business culture was highly gender biased, and communication was not easy when working with subordinates and other managers as most of them were men. Some of Maria's colleagues and company clients saw her official behaviour as too fastidious and demanding, while she thought it to be competent and assertive. So, Maria had to really try hard to negotiate what sometimes seemed like a cultural minefield, to make sure that she interacted with local colleagues and clients without any problems.

### Questions:

1. What challenges may be faced by German expatriates in India, as in the case of Maria Liese?
2. To what extent did gender issues influence the experiences and challenges that Maria came across on her assignment?
3. What insights about India should expatriate managers, especially women, keep in mind when given an expatriate assignment?
4. What can MNCs do to ensure successful selection, training and adjustment for, and completion of, expatriate assignments in the Indian context?

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