



Asia
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White Paper

**Developing Next Generation
Women Leaders Across the
Asia Pacific Region**

Asia Society Next Generation
Women's Leadership Advisory Committee

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Society



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Executive Summary

A Woman's Worth is Never Done

Girls and women are a fallow and underdeveloped resource in the Asia Pacific region. An enormous amount of work needs to be done to bring the numbers of women in leadership positions in business, government, and civil society to a level that matches the true gender ratio. The work of numerous governmental, intra-governmental, and non-governmental organizations has been commendable. Yet, the situation remains that even in the highest represented member economy, women occupy only 15.7% of corporate board seats, top government positions are woefully underrepresented, and girls' literacy rates and education opportunities lag behind those of their male counterparts. From the most basic levels pertaining to girls' education and security, to the level of small business entrepreneurship, and to the level of top governmental and corporate leadership positions, women remain undervalued and their skills or potential underutilized and underdeveloped. Consequently, the Asia Pacific region is not optimizing one of its fundamental human resources for economic growth: potential women leaders.

The Asia Society Next Generation Women's Leadership Advisory Committee proposes 10 urgent action items that can boost APEC's efforts to develop a larger and stronger presence of women leaders in the Asia Pacific in order close the gender gap and maximize the contribution of women to the economic development of the region. Our recommendations are posed at two levels: to address the key challenges confronting women in the workplace, and to expand women's opportunities for development before they enter the workplace. The recommendations seek to foster women's leadership development for economic growth and offer clear gains for all involved.

Recommendations for APEC Policy Implementation

In order to fully develop and ensure a next generation of female leaders, the Asia Society Next Generation Women's Leadership Advisory Committee strongly recommends that APEC and its member economies should take the following actions:

From the Classroom:

- APEC should create a Young Women and the Economy Summit in order to provide leadership skills, resources, role models, and encouragement to girls and young women.

- APEC should facilitate, and member economies should commit to, a Girls-in-School Promise, ensuring a dedication to high quality education, literacy, and enrolment rates for girls.
- APEC should start an APEC Industry Scholar program in order to provide young women with borderless scholarships funded by the private sector.
- APEC should create an Education Exchange for Women in order to bring together girls' schools for cooperation in curriculum and resource development.
- APEC member economies should organize a Sports for Success program to enact on the local level in order to teach girls confidence, competitive drive, and leadership skills through organized competitive sporting events.

To the Boardroom:

- APEC should create an Annex on the Workplace in order to track women's work force opportunities and representation in APEC member states.
- APEC should conduct a Percentage Study, carried out by an appointed task force, in order to study the feasibility of affirmative action for women on commercial boards and senior government platforms.
- APEC member economies should organize a Women-Friendly Credits policy framework in order to assess, incentivize, and penalize corporations based on the benefits and resources provided for female employees.
- APEC should start a Let Business Lead policy to incentivize the private sector to publicize positive images of women leaders.
- APEC should establish an Upward Resource Center in an APEC member economy in order to develop programs enabling working women to continue acquiring skills for success and leadership.

The State of Women's Leadership in APEC Economies

The Good News and the Bad News

The current state of women's leadership in the Asia Pacific offers some reason for hope, but much more needs to be done.

The Asia Pacific region consists of a diverse group of countries, and the prominent issues facing women differ in each of them. While some of the stronger economies may have well-educated women but very few women in government and business leadership positions, other, weaker economies face issues of low rates of higher education for women, an obstacle to overcome in order to make available a larger corps of women for high-level positions. Common factors unite the region, however, and regional solidarity will be instrumental in bringing women's rights and empowerment to their full potentials. All member economies will benefit from the recommendations in this paper, which call for policies affecting a range from the level of the schoolroom to the level of the boardroom.

According to the World Economic Forum (WEF) Global Gender Gap calculations, practically all the APEC economies have shown improvement in their absolute scores over the last five years. In many parts of the Asia Pacific region, gender gaps in the classroom, the operating room, and even the Cabinet room are shrinking. Legal and cultural environments are also shifting away from gender-based discrimination. On the educational achievement and health and survival fronts, girls and women come very close to doing just as well as their male counterparts in every APEC member economy. The almost universal ratification of the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) among APEC member economies is a heartening signal that, in principle, discrimination against women is not acceptable anywhere in APEC.

However, the reality has yet to reflect the ideal. The WEF Gender Gap Report shows that, even as of 2010, on the indicators most closely related to leadership (economic participation and political empowerment), the representation of women in key leadership positions in the region is nowhere close to parity. The numbers of women holding parliamentary or cabinet seats remain below 35% across the board. In only five APEC member economies female parliament membership is

above 25%, and in eight member economies female parliament membership is below 20%. Despite the Asia Pacific's distinction of holding the highest regional score for political empowerment according to the WEF Gender Gap Report, female political leaders remain an exception rather than the rule in the region, and in some areas where women have succeeded in summiting the political pyramid they have only been able to do so through their connections to strong men.

The acceptance of women in business tends to be higher than in elected government office. But closer scrutiny reveals that their representation at the highest levels is woefully under parity. Female board member percentages throughout APEC average less than 7%.¹ As a group, the APEC economies differ significantly. Some reports show that roughly 15% of the board members of the Fortune 500 companies in the US are women, still far below even a quarter of total board members. On the other end of the spectrum, female representation in Japan, for instance, is below 1%. In China, women hold roughly 5% of board positions. Even in the US, only 2% of boards are chaired by women. In the Republic of Korea, even for mid-level government managerial posts, the penetration by women is at about 10%, while board-level representation is barely at 2%.²

For the broad band of women who work or want to work, across multiple socioeconomic classes, balancing work and family continues to be the major hurdle to ascension of the professional ladder. Work structures remain inflexible to women's needs. Child and elder care options are inadequate for many women throughout the Asia Pacific. In some cases, differing levels of economic development between countries, or between classes or regions within a country, have also led to a zero-sum pas de deux in which some women advance only with the relative stagnation or regression of other women, as in instances where legions of women leave their homes and families to serve as domestic labour to allow their female employers to concentrate on their careers. We have yet to see a comprehensive study across the APEC economies of the flexible work levers and support infrastructure to enable women to better meet their professional and family demands.

At a foundational level, we take heart in the improvement of girls' school enrolment and literacy rates in the APEC economies. We can project that there is a stronger pipeline of qualified women to fill leadership positions in the next generation. That said, girls are not readily provided with strong opportunities and pathways toward successful leadership positions in the workplace. Because it has

¹ Catalyst, "Women on Boards," 2011, http://www.catalyst.org/file/476/qt_women_on_boards.pdf.

² Choe Sang-Hun, "Korean Women Flock to Government," *New York Times*, March 1, 2010 (accessed September 6, 2011) <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/02/world/asia/02iht-women.html?ref=thefemalefactor&pagewanted=1>.

been a hard slog in many parts of the world even to achieve equal access to education for girls, leadership opportunities and training have yet to figure highly on the agenda of opportunities for girls.

At a Glance

The following table gives an APEC-wide view of how APEC economies performed in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2010:

APEC Economies in the WEF Global Gender Gap Rankings 2010³

Country	Global Ranking (out of 134 countries)	Economic Participation & Opportunity Score (0-1)	Educational Attainment Score (0-1)	Health & Survival Score (0-1)	Political Empowerment Score (0-1)
Australia	23	0.74281	1	0.9739	0.1917
Brunei Darussalam	77	0.7404	0.9931	0.9659	0.0000
Canada	20	0.7768	0.9977	0.9784	0.1959
Chile	48	0.5338	0.9963	0.9796	0.2957
People's Rep. of China	61	0.6927	0.9810	0.9290	0.1495
Indonesia	87	0.5750	0.9640	0.9663	0.1407
Hong Kong, China	-	-	-	-	-
Japan	94	0.5718	0.9860	0.9796	0.0722
Republic of Korea	104	0.5203	0.9466	0.9730	0.0969
Malaysia	98	0.5765	0.9899	0.9736	0.0517

³ The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report annually measures gender gap disparities by country worldwide. The rankings are helpful in comparing countries or regions and in providing an idea of where countries' women's rights stand in relation to the rest of the globe. Scores are compiled from a number of followed factors within each sector. For this paper, the scores provide a standard concept of the standing of APEC member countries' gender gaps. This gives a general background through which to approach the status of women's issues in the region. Data for several APEC members are not included in the tables in this paper because they have not been included in the Gender Gap Report, either because they are combined with other countries or because the WEF was unable to collect enough necessary data, due to circumstances in the individual country, to provide an accurate ranking. Ricardo Hausmann, Laura D. Tyson, and Saadia Zahidi, "Global Gender Gap Report 2010," Geneva: World Economic Forum, 2010.

Country	Global Ranking (out of 134 countries)	Economic Participation & Opportunity Score (0-1)	Educational Attainment Score (0-1)	Health & Survival Score (0-1)	Political Empowerment Score (0-1)
Mexico	91	0.5212	0.9910	0.9796	0.1390
New Zealand	5	0.7743	1	0.9697	0.3792
Papua New Guinea	-	-	-	-	-
Peru	60	0.6201	0.9796	0.9658	0.1926
The Philippines	9	0.7611	1	0.9796	0.3212
Russia	45	0.7360	0.9994	0.9791	0.0999
Singapore	56	0.7527	0.9375	0.9677	0.1076
Chinese Taipei	-	-	-	-	-
Thailand	57	0.7160	0.9855	0.9796	0.0829
The United States	19	0.7991	1	0.9792	0.1861
Viet Nam	72	0.7212	0.9242	0.9469	0.1182

The Picture of Health

APEC economies are moving in the direction of higher women's inclusion, but much stronger action is needed to take this trend toward full parity with men. In particular, there must be a focus not only on the provision of education and health to the next generation of young women, but also the active creation of opportunities exposing them to the skills, platforms, and models for the practice of leadership. A young girl attending primary school should have no dearth of role models or leadership opportunities. She should be able to say with a straight face that she aims to reach the highest levels of business or government, without doubting that the support and development infrastructure exist within which she can make her best efforts. At the regional level, the picture of health is a proliferation of female leaders in the chambers of commerce and the halls of government, fluent in the exchange of best practices and new models of leadership across borders.

Factors Affecting the Next Generation of Women Leaders

Breaking out of the Laggard's Race

Common barriers hamper the success of women across the Asia Pacific region. Manifestations of the glass ceiling range from acts of commission that actively discriminate against women or stereotype female leaders, to acts of omission that neglect to showcase female role models or provide opportunities for guidance, sharing, mentoring, and capacity building. The age-old tightrope between work and family is par for the obstacle course for every working woman, made worse by inflexible work structures and poor support infrastructures for working women. In such an environment, women consistently pay a higher price for success, assuming they have the capital on which to draw. The persisting inferior value assigned to girls and women in some Asian societies means that their access to the best opportunities is restricted.

To address barriers as they are faced is to play a catch-up game to technological and economic transformations, and to trail ever further behind the surging aspirations and expectations of women. The Asia Pacific in particular is undergoing transformations in a compressed amount of time. Societal norms, mindsets about gender roles, and organic family and social support structures cannot keep up with the rate at which new technologies and growing global demand drive women into the workplace and new digital and social spaces. That disparity is felt most by women who now have aspirations for leadership roles, but cannot access resources at home or at work to help them.

To break out of this laggard's race, APEC and affiliated institutions must not only help women today to succeed as leaders, but actively create the conditions for next generations of women leaders to emerge. In envisioning the next generation of women leaders in the Asia Pacific, the germane question to ask is what the Asia Pacific will look like in the coming years.

Several trends stand out as having the potential to significantly impact the development of women's leadership in the region.

Demographics: Aging and Imbalanced

The Asia Pacific region is moving toward longer life spans and greater gender imbalance.

A drastic gender imbalance is already taking form in China. There are reports that, by 2020, there will be 30 million more men of marriage age than women.⁴

⁴ People's Daily Online, "New Campaign Targets Gender Ratio Imbalance," August 17, 2011 (accessed September 6, 2011) <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90882/7571975.html>.

China's example is the starkest illustration of a phenomenon that is taking place in other East Asian countries as a result of the combination of a traditional bias for male babies, falling birth rates, and technology for prenatal sex selection.

The direct implication for women is that, in becoming rarefied, they risk becoming reified. In a plausible scenario, men will exercise their purchasing power over women, and there will be an increase in human trafficking. Proportionally speaking, there will also be fewer women leader role models. In an already imbalanced numbers game, women are less likely to make it to the top. Also, if women as a political and commercial constituency shrink, they may have less influence over policy issues of importance to them.

Aging populations in the developed economies mean that the sandwiched population will face additional pressures. Life expectancies will rise above 70 years across Asia by 2020, exceeding 80 years in Hong Kong and Japan.⁵ Meanwhile, because of the increase of women's professional aspirations and the rise of modernizing family values and expectations, the average marriage age in the Asia Pacific region is steadily rising, along with a decrease in the percentage of marriages.⁶ This, along with other factors affecting the number of children families are producing, has meant that fertility is below replacement rate in 12 of the 21 APEC countries. The increasingly disproportionate balance between young and old will further weigh the burden of supporting a longer-living generation of elders on the shoulders of the narrowing segment of the economically productive.

Based on current traditions, we expect that a disproportionate amount of the weight may fall in the first instance on the family unit, particularly on women. Without well-developed attendant policies and infrastructure to support a graying population, there may be pressures for women not to enter the workforce, to leave the workforce, or to have a harder time balancing work and family obligations.

Religiosity: Growing and Restricting

Religiosity is on the rise throughout the world, as people turn to religion for a sense of values and moral standards in a time of fast-paced changes. Pronounced urban-rural divides and social inequity in some parts of Asia Pacific create room for religion-based groups to gain traction in those cases where they are well equipped to deliver services and organize activities at the community level. Changing political landscapes, such as the decline of a guiding philosophy like Marxism, lead some to anticipate a further rise in religion.

⁵ People's Daily Online, "New Campaign Targets Gender Ratio Imbalance," August 17, 2011 (accessed September 6, 2011) <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90882/7571975.html>.

⁶ Gavin W. Jones, Working Paper Series No. 131: "Changing Marriage Patterns in Asia," Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore, January 2010 (accessed September 6, 2011) http://www.ari.nus.edu.sg/docs/wps/wps10_131.pdf.

The balance between religion and cultural as well as political norms is an area of concern. Current trends indicate that women tend to be the first targets for demonstrations of fundamentalism, as a locus for issues of morality, decency, and tradition. Fundamentalist religiosity has a tendency to play itself out over gender issues, such as honor killings, genital mutilation, or whether girls should go to school.

The Islamic “Obedient Wives Club,” which quotes religion to teach women how to “be submissive and keep their husbands happy in the bedroom,” has branches in several Southeast Asian countries and plans to open in major Western capitals. In the US, some women politicians are brandishing rhetoric that is simultaneously religious and conservative with regard to the role of women, for example that wives have a duty to be obedient to their husbands.⁷ These trends may set new norms that prioritize women’s domestic duties over their professional aspirations, or through which women rise to leadership positions partly by spotlighting their gender conservative credentials.

In contrast, it is far less common to witness almost any branch of religion being quoted to support developing women toward leadership positions. Vigilance is required in facing the assertions against and restrictions over women made in the name of religion, particularly to keep these from becoming codified in the secular space. Religious authority has tended to rest in and reinforce patriarchal structures. Women’s leadership is close to absent in the religious environment. This situation is accentuated by a global lack of modern responses to certain tenets that may not have adapted much over centuries. As religion grows to take on a more important place in future society, and unless there are active moves to inject considerations of women’s empowerment, young girls will be strapped to find female role models of leadership from within their religions. Because what the devout observe and learn from their worship can influence all areas of their life, any lack of rhetoric or action for women within the religious space can potentially negate other efforts made in the secular space.

Whereas many of the global gender indices currently study the place of women in the economic, educational, health, and political spaces, there may be a need to grow our collective understanding of their place in the religious domain. This will be a first step toward developing the right instruments to promote gender equality and empowerment within the religious context. This trend suggests that there is a need to elevate the role and status of women within religion discourse, so that women need not take the hit when religion asserts itself, and women can become credible leaders within societies that embrace the best of religion.

⁷ Ryan Lizza, “Leap of Faith: the Making of a Republican Front-Runner,” *The New Yorker*, August 15, 2011 (accessed September 6, 2011) http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2011/08/15/110815fa_fact_lizza.

New Media: Equalizing and Empowering

The rapid development of new media, and its unprecedented use for enacting social change, points to vast possibilities for empowering women. Women represent 46% of internet users worldwide.⁸ Women spend more time online than men, at an average of 24.8 hours per month versus 22.9 for men. Women spend 20% more time on retail websites than men, thus purchasing more and making them a greater and growing target of advertisers. Perhaps most interestingly, especially in the context of women's place in business, across all age brackets more women than men use social media websites and spend more time on them.⁹ Out of their monthly time spent online, women spend an average of 16.3% of their time on social media sites, compared to 11.7% for men. These figures mean that websites now cater more to female customers in order to increase user numbers. Some argue that this paves the way for women to become more involved in these companies themselves, as women's input and guidance is needed to best present products to female consumers. As the female consumer gains power, so should women creating and selling products.

In the knowledge economy, the male comparative advantage of physical strength is diminished. Knowledge-based economic activities may in some cases privilege female qualities like attention to detail and the ability to handle small objects, as in some precision engineering processes. In the services field, especially as businesses turn increasingly toward social media, women's natural and nurtured tendencies toward network building, socializing, and communication can become a concrete asset. Women are more naturally wired toward success in such an environment. New media also open up new spaces that, by virtue of their novelty, would be equally available to all regardless of race or gender. While new media can of course replicate existing mindsets that are discriminatory, nothing inherent to the new media has emerged that biases against women. Because there are no existing protocols, there are equal opportunities for women to write the rules and to excel in this space, for example in shaping opinions in the blogosphere. On the strength of the relatively equitable showing of girls in literacy, there is reason to be optimistic that girls should be able to ride this new trend toward an increased showing in leadership ranks in the future.

New media also democratize resources and knowledge, particularly those of the ground-up variety that better understand and address the challenges faced by most women. The emergence of new media is an opportunity, as it offers ways in

⁸ Jennifer Van Grove, "How Women Use the Web [REPORT]" Mashable, July 28, 2010 (accessed September 6, 2011) <http://www.blogger.com/frame.php?url=http://mashable.com/2010/07/28/women-on-the-web/>.

⁹ Johanna Blakley, "Social media and the End of Gender," TED, December 2010 (accessed September 6, 2011) http://www.ted.com/talks/johanna_blakley_social_media_and_the_end_of_gender.html.

which women can share knowledge, support each other, and provide products and services for other women. The borderless flow of role models, inspirational stories, and positive examples will render it easier for a girl in a village to see that a woman can run the capital.

A Call to Action: 10 Critical Steps for APEC

APEC's Role

In many instances, the policy-level pace of women's issues has been kept lively by intergovernmental organizations that are less entrenched in specific social mores and are able to facilitate an exchange of best practices between their member states. APEC holds a special role in helping this effort. Since 1996, APEC has given the female leader in the Asia Pacific a valuable platform in policy through the APEC Women Leaders Network (WLN). By now, over 4,000 women have directed their recommendations on women and the economy through this platform to the APEC leaders and ministers responsible for economic and women's issues.

Last year, APEC's efforts received a boost and a focus through the inauguration of the Women's Entrepreneurship Summit (WES), which aims to encourage greater participation by women in entrepreneurship and business leadership in the APEC member countries. In the space of a year, the WES established a networking portal, conducted the Yokohama SME Summit, and advised APEC leaders, ministers, and officials of the summit's findings. The APEC Policy Partnership on Women and the Economy (PPWE) was created earlier this year to facilitate the collaboration between the public and private sectors to integrate more women into the economy.

By increasing stakeholder involvement across the public, private, and people sectors, and at the same time sharpening attention on key issues like entrepreneurship, APEC is positively combining wider reach with deeper focus, which we believe can realize more practical, directed actions.

Asia Society's Efforts

In 2010, Asia Society inaugurated the annual Women Leaders of New Asia (WLNA) initiative to bring together leading women in business, government, and civil society for substantive discussions on the role that women can play now and in the future. Two rounds of WLNA have birthed necessary discourse among women leaders, a redefinition of leadership according to the New Asian woman, and a deeper appreciation of the barriers faced by, and opportunities available to, women across the Asia Pacific. For five years running, Asia Society has also conducted the successful Asia 21 program, which brings together diverse young leaders to

discuss leadership issues in the region, giving men and women under the age of forty chances to network, mentor, and exchange best practices.

Arising from this growing capital of young Asian leaders, the Asia Society Next Generation Women's Leadership Advisory Committee was formed to study the state of women's leadership in the Asia Pacific and lay out recommendations for improvement. The Advisory Committee comprises diverse professionals experienced in the Asia Pacific. The Advisory Committee reached out to a spectrum of over 600 male and female members of the WLNA and Asia 21 communities to assess the status of women's leadership in Asia and identify the major challenges for its progress.

Action Plan

Drawing on Asia Society's own experience in nurturing next generation leaders, and channelling the diverse, ground-up views of its community of leaders, this White Paper puts forward 10 recommendations.

The recommendations are organized according to two distinct sets of needs in two stages of women's lives. First, they apply to education and the resources that girls and young women need to lay the foundation for future professional success. Second, they tackle the pressures on working women who seek to balance family and work while negotiating often male-dominated domains, to allow them to progress to positions of leadership.

From the Classroom

Within the education sector, the Advisory Committee recommends that APEC, along with the necessary support of its member economies, adopt the following measures in order to create a sustainable economic resource of Asian women prepared to take action and leadership roles in the next generation:

- 1. APEC should create a Young Women and the Economy Summit in order to provide leadership skills resources, role models, and encouragement to girls and young women.**

APEC should conduct a Young Women and the Economy Summit on a regular basis, targeted at the secondary and tertiary education levels, to expose younger women to leadership resources and role models. An alternative is to have a young women's parallel session tagged onto ongoing meetings, where young women have further opportunities to observe successful women in action. This can help young women to start building networks at an early stage. It would also start to grow a community of possible future women leaders.

2. APEC should facilitate and member economies should commit to a Girls-in-School Promise, ensuring a dedication to high quality education, literacy, and enrolment rates for girls.

APEC's official establishment of a commitment to continue, and improve on where applicable, the positive record of APEC economies in enrolling girls in school, would bring the Asia Pacific region toward the goal of achieving perfect parity between boys and girls in literacy and enrolment rates. The Girls-in-School Promise can set targets for women's literacy as well as girls' enrolment by level of education and by academic discipline (with attention to traditional male-dominated disciplines like engineering and science). Because education is the most important foundation of future success, this commitment should be an element of every official APEC minister's or leader's statement or declaration relating to women and the economy.

3. APEC should start an APEC Industry Scholar program in order to provide young women with borderless scholarships funded by the private sector.

In this win-win program, commercial bodies will fund borderless APEC-wide scholarships for women in disciplines relevant to their industry. For example, IT software companies could fund scholarships for women students in engineering. This would allow the public sector to tap into commercial funding to ensure higher training for deserving women, while the private sector gets access to female talent at an early stage. There is strong publicity value both for companies that can present themselves as supportive of the development of women, as well as for APEC to underscore its commitment to education. By having APEC lead the program in a borderless manner, there is the further benefit of enhancing exchanges between young women of different APEC countries while cultivating future talent for absorption into the private sector.

4. APEC should create an Education Exchange for Women in order to bring together girls' schools for cooperation in curriculum and resource development.

APEC should facilitate a platform that would bring schools (such as the Asian Women's Leadership University Project, which has a focus on women) together for the collaborative production of syllabi and resources for women's leadership education. The Education Exchange would develop resources with a better

appreciation of local conditions for women, and then propagate them to all higher education institutions in APEC member economies.

5. APEC member economies should organize a Sports for Success program to enact on the local level in order to teach girls confidence, competitive drive, and leadership skills through organized competitive sporting events.

The skills necessary for leadership in public forums are often developed outside of the office or classroom. Through this program, APEC would create sporting and competing opportunities for girls at the regional level, something that is currently lacking throughout much of the Asia Pacific. This is a feel-good initiative that can be kick-started initially on a bilateral or smaller-group level, then scaled up to be led by APEC. The wider the range, the greater the opportunities for meaningful interaction between young women across the region. An attendant element of this program is the commitment by APEC member economies to equal spending on girls' and boys' sports, where differences currently occur, in the vein of the above recommendation. A sports initiative would boost girls' confidence, competitive drive, and leadership skills, thereby forming a foundation for leadership later in life.

To the Boardroom

The Advisory Committee recommends that APEC enact the following necessary measures to ensure that once out of the education system, women are provided with the support vital to their progression up to the highest levels within the workplace:

6. APEC should create an Annex on the Workplace in order to track women's workforce opportunities and representation in APEC member states.

Through the addition of a regular item on its agenda, the APEC Women and the Economy Summit would greatly benefit the state of women's health by reviewing the performance of APEC member economies in various gender equality and empowerment indices that APEC member economies jointly agree to be of relevance. In the review process, it would be particularly helpful for members to be graded on an index specifically developed for APEC to assess the health of workplace conditions in member economies. This is an element currently lacking among the plethora of indices tabulated by various organizations. Yet such an annex to the existing indices would deal with the

most practical and concrete factors that impact working women on a day-to-day basis, such as the accessibility of childcare systems or flexible work structures. APEC should develop this supplementary measurement tool in consultation with APEC member economies. Its use would be a necessary addition to existing measurement tools, and would give APEC member economies a common basis on which to assess areas for improvement and sharing.

7. APEC should conduct a Percentage Study, carried out by an appointed task force, in order to study the feasibility of affirmative action for women on commercial boards and senior government platforms.

An APEC-sponsored team should study whether it would be beneficial for APEC to commit to achieving a certain percentage of female representation on commercial boards and governments. The team would study the effects of such percentage commitments where they have been made, and propose other percentages, or proxy targets, should a specific percentage be inappropriate or ineffective for the APEC context. The team's deliverable is to propose its findings before the next APEC Women and Economy Summit, so that APEC may adopt a percentage commitment or an alternative to one. This study process, besides eliciting better understanding of this lever, would foster an important dialogue, encouraging governments to actively think about the demographics of their leaders and work to implement policies for female inclusion. If effective, the outcome would be to put gender discrepancies on the radar screen for governments, the private sector, and the public at large.

8. APEC member economies should organize a Women-Friendly Credits policy framework in order to assess, incentivize, and penalize corporations based on the benefits and resources provided for female employees.

The proposed Index on the Workplace will leave the individual governments of APEC member economies better informed and positioned to develop their own policy landscapes to assess, incentivize, and penalize corporate players based on the full package of benefits and support they offer for female employees, including such factors as childcare and eldercare facilities, flexible hours, and maternity leave. Just as some governments currently reward or castigate organizations based on their efforts to conserve energy or be environment friendly, they can likewise develop credits for companies that make efforts to be women friendly. Such recognition can run the gamut from celebratory awards to

concrete fiscal incentives. There is no limit to the range of innovative solutions companies can come up with if they are given sufficient incentives by forward-looking governments.

9. APEC should start a Let Business Lead policy to incentivize the private sector for publicizing positive images of women leaders.

The suggestion for the message of women's leadership to be promoted is constantly made, but not necessarily to the best equipped body. Instead of having government or government-linked agencies push this message, individual governments should focus their energies on creating a policy environment within APEC that motivates commercial bodies to promote this message organically. For example, the institution of a Woman of the Year Award is arguably more engaging to the public if run by a leading women's journal rather than, or in addition to, one run by a government agency. The increase of positive media representation will bring visibility to the women already in leadership positions to stand as role models for young girls and challenge socially held stereotypes about women's leadership abilities and even the numbers of women in these positions.

10. APEC should establish an Upward Resource Center in an APEC member economy in order to develop programs enabling working women to continue acquiring skills for success and leadership.

Continuing education workshops and resources help women to improve the career skills necessary to move upward in the workforce. APEC should appoint an existing institution or think tank in an APEC member economy to act as a resource center to develop resources for taking working women to the next stage of leadership. For example, such a resource center would organize remotely run seminars for women with portable career skills to improve their negotiation or career mobility skills. This Resource Center would help to develop women's skills once out of school, and act to encourage women to stay in the workforce and actively develop their careers.

Room for improvement

In advancing the above and other recommendations, we would like to underline the importance of involving male policy and opinion makers in the initiatives to improve opportunities for women. This is to underscore that women's leadership

is not a concern only of women, but of all members and beneficiaries of economic growth. The contributions of male leaders should be invited and valued. Many of the initiatives underway and the new recommendations proposed, from mentorship to flexible work structures, can be executed more meaningfully with the participation of the male constituency. Men's involvement in the process is essential to the societal acceptance, and therefore success, of these programs and their outcomes on the ground.

Appendix:

Positive Models: Organizations Promoting Women's Leadership in the Asia Pacific and Beyond

10,000 Women

10,000 Women is a 5-year initiative funded by Goldman Sachs to sponsor the business and management education of 10,000 under-served women globally. The program is run through a network of academic and non-profit organizations that provide contextually relevant curriculum to students. Students are offered post-graduate support from these organizations, local businesses, and Goldman Sachs.

Today: Since it started in 2009, 10,000 women has been active in 22 countries and Goldman Sachs has committed over \$100 million toward financing women's educations.

Tomorrow: The project is currently in the middle of its planned course and will continue to expand its scope to reach more women over the next two years.

<http://www2.goldmansachs.com/citizenship/10000women/index.html>

The Global Fund for Women

The largest women's rights advocacy group in the world, the Global Fund for Women is a publicly funded non-profit organization that provides grants for women-led organizations. In describing their grants, the Fund says that it "primarily [provides] flexible, general support grants that address universal issues such as reproductive health and choice, access to education, economic independence, political participation, the rights of sexual minorities and the prevention of violence against women and girls."

Today: Since its start in 1987, it has provided support to over 4,200 women's rights organizations in 172 countries.

Tomorrow: The Global Fund for Women continues to provide grants, as well as advocate for women's legal rights such as for broader implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women and peace and security.

<http://www.globalfundforwomen.org/>

Council of Women World Leaders

A policy division of the Aspen Institute, the council is a network of current and former female presidents and prime ministers. It was started in 1996 by the first democratically elected female leader in the world, Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, president of Iceland from 1980 to 1996. Since 1998, the Council has also included female cabinet ministers in its mission to promote and bring visibility to women leaders both nationally and internationally.

Today: The council has advocated for an increase in the number of women in the top positions of government office, and promotes good governance by those women.

Tomorrow: The council continues to support the increase of women in leadership through the dialogue provided by such programs as the Madeleine K. Albright Women's Voices at the Aspen Institute series of round-table discussions.

<http://www.cwwl.org/index.html>

Asian Women's Leadership University Project

Organizers plan to open a university that provides young Asian women with a liberal arts education to prepare them for leadership positions for the sake of "[advancing] social, political and economic development in the region." For example, as a part of AWLU's proposal, the university would organize an Empowerment Fund to competitively award financing for students' independent projects and entrepreneurial endeavors.

Today: AWLU has so far gathered a team of leaders from educational institutions and other organizations around the world who have created an ambitious proposal for the university. In the past couple months, they have raised more than \$120,000.

Tomorrow: Organizers aim to open the University in Malaysia in September of 2015.

<http://awluproject.org/>

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10 Critical Steps For APEC and its Member Economies to Develop Next Generation Women Leaders

In order to fully develop and ensure a next generation of female leaders, the Asia Society Next Generation Women's Leadership Advisory Committee strongly recommends that APEC and its member economies should take the following actions:

From the Classroom:

- APEC should create a Young Women and the Economy Summit in order to provide leadership skills, resources, role models, and encouragement to girls and young women.
- APEC should facilitate, and member economies should commit to, a Girls-in-School Promise, ensuring a dedication to high quality education, literacy, and enrolment rates for girls.
- APEC should start an APEC Industry Scholar program in order to provide young women with borderless scholarships funded by the private sector.
- APEC should create an Education Exchange for Women in order to bring together girls' schools for cooperation in curriculum and resource development.
- APEC member economies should organize a Sports for Success program to enact on the local level in order to teach girls confidence, competitive drive, and leadership skills through organized competitive sporting events.

To the Boardroom:

- APEC should create an Annex on the Workplace in order to track women's work force opportunities and representation in APEC member states.
- APEC should conduct a Percentage Study, carried out by an appointed task force, in order to study the feasibility of affirmative action for women on commercial boards and senior government platforms.
- APEC member economies should organize a Women-Friendly Credits policy framework in order to assess, incentivize, and penalize corporations based on the benefits and resources provided for female employees.
- APEC should start a Let Business Lead policy to incentivize the private sector to publicize positive images of women leaders.
- APEC should establish an Upward Resource Center in an APEC member economy in order to develop programs enabling working women to continue acquiring skills for success and leadership.