WOMEN LEADERS

Women Leaders in Asia:
Building on Progress, Confronting Challenges

NEW DELHI, INDIA | APRIL 12–14, 2013

Asia Society | WOMEN LEADERS OF NEW ASIA

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FOREWORD

The Women Leaders of New Asia (WLNA) initiative was created in 2010 to build professional networks of Asian women across the region and to create a community of carefully selected women leaders who would raise and address substantive issues around gender and leadership in a changing world. Heading into 2013, having held three summits (Hong Kong, Singapore, and China), and convened over 400 women leaders from the region, the Initiative had developed a strong base upon which to build.

While much had been accomplished over the last three years in convening leaders and building the network, we believed the time was right to focus on the next phase of our work, in particular on catalyzing change and sustaining impact. In this effort, the 2013 conference assembled 35 key leaders from Asia and the United States and across sectors (business, academia, government, etc.) to develop an action-oriented agenda going forward. This high-powered group focused on a select number of key issue areas, which built on discussions at the last three summits and the Society's 2012 report, *Rising to the Top? A Report on Women's Leadership in Asia*. We were particularly interested in the instruments that sustain and strengthen women's leadership positions in society. Thus, we focused on government policies around political and economic empowerment that affect women's leadership, as well as specific private sector initiatives that have helped women achieve stronger leadership status, particularly as it impacts the next generation. The goal was to highlight success stories and develop a forward looking agenda for this important initiative.

From these discussions our aim today is to take the initiative to another level. Not just by broadening the movement, and strengthening those connections, but by putting them to use in new and crucial ways. **The next phase of the initiative** will require greater efforts to encourage focus on a specific set of issues, more purposeful and sustained collaboration between participants, and increasing our institutional capacity to discuss the issues at our Centers around the world. Through a combination of convenings, surveys, and research we have come to further understand that despite economic growth, the region still lags behind on many key women's indicators. So, for example, Vietnam, Iran, Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Pakistan, and Nepal all fare poorly in studies of educational attainment for women. These same countries also come up short when looking at female economic participation and opportunity. However, it is important to note that these lags are not specific to developing countries alone.

To address these lags, and while continuing efforts to build out and strengthen the network, the three focal points of our activities going forward will be:

1. Promoting effective policies that promote women leaders at the governmental and corporate levels.
2. Changing attitudes toward women in social and public settings
3. Developing and engaging next generation women leaders

We look forward to working together to tackle these most important issues.

Michael G. Kulma
Executive Director, Global Leadership Initiatives
Asia Society

AGENDA

FRIDAY, APRIL 12, 2013

6:30–8:00 PM

A NEW WOMEN'S REVOLUTION IN THE MAKING?

While the Asia Pacific region has made great strides in narrowing the gender gap in recent decades, significant disparities remain within individual countries and across the region. Why in this day and age, are women still subjected to unimaginable violence, systemic discrimination, and barriers that stymie their potential and progress? What explains the dichotomy between societal demands to redress discriminatory cultural practices versus the political will to address legal challenges and initiate structural reforms? In a rapidly changing Asia, what opportunities are available for women as they endeavor to lead economically, politically, and socially? How do we ensure that policy is actually put into action?

MODERATOR:

Vishakha N. Desai
President Emerita, Asia Society
Special Advisor for Global Affairs, Columbia University

SPEAKERS:

Margaret Alva
Governor of Rajasthan
Government of Rajasthan

Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury
State Minister
Ministry of Women and Children Affairs
Bangladesh

Penny Low
Member of Parliament
Parliament of Singapore

Melanne S. Verveer
Executive Director
Georgetown Institute for Women,
Peace and Security (GIWPS)

SATURDAY, APRIL 13, 2013

8:30 AM

WELCOME REMARKS

Vishakha N. Desai
President Emerita, Asia Society
Special Advisor for Global Affairs, Columbia University

8:45–10:15 AM

SESSION 1

**Promoting Gender Equality and Empowering Women:
The Post-MDG Agenda**

Promoting gender equality and empowering women is one of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). While some of the goals have already been met ahead of the 2015 target date, according to the latest MDG Report of 2012, the goal of gender equality remains unfulfilled and women continue to face discrimination with regard to access to education, economic opportunities, and political participation.

- With the realization that overall MDG goals are going to fall short, what should the post-MDG agenda look like?

- Which countries have been most successful in advancing women's political and economic participation, and closing the gap between commitment and practice, and how were they able to do it?

- What are the lessons for the laggards?

- What are the roles and responsibilities of men and boys in promoting and ensuring gender equality?

MODERATOR:

Astrid S. Tuminez
Regional Director
Legal and Corporate Affairs
Microsoft Southeast Asia

DISCUSSION LEADERS:

Caren Grown	**Gautam Kumra**
Senior Gender Advisor	Director
Bureau of Policy, Planning and Learning	McKinsey & Company, India
USAID	

Lakshmi Puri
Acting Head, UN Women
Assistant Secretary-General, United Nations

10:15–11:15 AM

KEYNOTE CONVERSATION

Violence Against Women: India as a Case Study
Last December's brutal rape case in New Delhi and the subsequent death of the victim bespeaks the systemic discrimination and gender-based violence that women continue to endure across India and many parts of Asia. While it may be unimaginable, especially against the backdrop of Asia's rising prosperity and rapid change, the prevailing cultural norms and behavioral practices are still prejudiced against women in much of the region.

- What are the underlying causes for gender-based violence and its far-reaching implications for Asia's future?

- What explains the reluctance to enact laws and policies that safeguard women's rights and ensure their successful implementation?

- Which Asian countries are at the forefront of gender mainstreaming, how are they doing it, and what lessons can be learned from their experience?

Indira Jaising
Director, Lawyers Collective Women's Rights Initiative
Former Solicitor General of India

11:15 AM–12:45 PM

SESSION 2

**Expanding Economic Opportunities for Women:
A Prerequisite for Smart Economics**
Accepted as a key driver of economic growth, governments and the private-sector are now increasingly looking at ways to make economic opportunities more accessible to women. Nevertheless, women continue to be poorer than men, face barriers in the workplace, earn less than men for the same work, and encounter difficulties in accessing credit and markets.

- What are the most critical persisting challenges that must be tackled before substantial improvement on women's economic participation will be achieved? What part must each of us, from policy makers to corporate leaders, therefore play in order to address these barriers?

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- Where have we seen significant progress and what can we learn from these case studies?
- What practical steps can unlock the economic potential of women, with a focus on those who are self-employed or employed by the informal sectors?

Reflection & Action: The last 15 minutes of the session is dedicated to recapping the key discussion points and developing actionable ideas for moving the issues forward.

MODERATOR:

Rhodora Palomar-Fresnedi
Executive Director
Unilab Foundation

DISCUSSION LEADERS:

Spenta C. Kandawalla Director Captain Chemical Industries (PVT) Ltd	**Sonal Shah** Senior Fellow Case Foundation
Li Xin Managing Editor Caixin - China Economics & Finance	

1:45–2:30 PM | **SPOTLIGHT CONVERSATION**

The Changing Media Landscape

Ankhi Das Head of Public Policy Facebook India	**Monnita Komolvadhin** News Editor Thai Public Broadcasting Service

2:30–4:00 PM | **SESSION 3**

Thinking Ahead with Next Generation Women Leaders
Today, across the Asia-Pacific region, women are entering the workforce in ever-larger numbers and stepping into leadership positions at institutions across the public and private sectors. This rapidly changing demographic trend will have a profound bearing for the future of the region.

- What do the next generation of women leaders perceive as the most pressing challenges confronting their generation?
- What are their priorities and how are they similar or different from the preceding generations' priorities?
- Which women leaders inspire them and what lessons can they learn from the experiences of those leaders?

Reflection & Action: The last 15 minutes of the session is dedicated to recapping the key discussion points and developing actionable steps.

MODERATOR:

Kalpana Raina
Managing Partner,
252 Solutions, LLC

DISCUSSION LEADERS:

Jade Taihee Chung	**Sheila Marcelo**
Executive Managing Director of HR	Founder & CEO
General Electric, Korea	Care.com
Shinto Nugroho	
Head of Public Policy and	
Government Relations	
Google Indonesia	

4:30–5:15 PM

SPOTLIGHT CONVERSATION

Women Leaders in Philanthropy

Kiran Nadar
Chairperson
Kiran Nadar Museum of Art

6:30–7:30 PM

RECEPTION

Hosted by
Ambassador Nancy J. Powell,
United States Ambassador to India
U.S. Embassy in New Delhi

SUNDAY, APRIL 14, 2013

8:30–10:00 AM

SESSION 4

**Increasing Women's Political Participation:
Turning Policies into Practice**

Participants discuss best practices and successful interventions from the Asia-Pacific region that have made the difference for women's political participation.

- What progressive laws have led to the rapid increase in the number of women in parliaments and at different levels of governments?

- How has social media changed the way women organize, galvanize, and take political action?

- What other mechanisms can strengthen participation of women in the decision-making processes?

Reflection & Action: The last 15 minutes of the session is dedicated to recapping the key discussion points and developing actionable steps.

MODERATOR:

Anja Manuel
Partner
RiceHadleyGates, LLC

DISCUSSION LEADERS:

Attiya Inayatullah
Member of Parliament
National Assembly of Pakistan

Nilar Oo
Deputy Country Representative
Myanmar
Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

Mu Sochua
Member of Parliament
National Assembly of Cambodia

10:00–11:30 AM

SESSION 5

Women Leaders Roundtable

Conducted world café-style, participants build on our conversations to identify 2-3 practical steps to overcome barriers to:

- Women leaders' political participation

- Women leaders' economic empowerment
- Fostering next generation women leaders

TABLE DISCUSSION LEADERS

Sabeen Mahmud
Founder & Director
PeaceNiche

Wenchi Yu
Senior Advisor
Secretary's Office of Global
Women's Issues
U.S. Department of State

Shinto Nugroho
Head of Public Policy and
Government Relations
Google Indonesia

11:30 AM–12:15 PM

SESSION 6

Summation of the World Café discussion
Table discussion leaders from each of the world café tables begins by summarizing the morning conversations at their tables, sharing salient points, and soliciting further input for a realistic action agenda

1:15–2:00 PM

SESSION 7

Forging Strategic Partnerships
To execute the action agenda, it will be critical to join hands with key organizations from across the region. Participants identify potential partners, discuss modalities for partnership, and draft a plan of action to secure long-term collaboration.

2:00–3:00 PM

SESSION 8

Developing an Action Agenda
Building on the roundtable conversation and discussions over the day and half, this session is devoted to developing a forward-looking action plan for each of the topic areas as well as the Women Leaders of New Asia Initiative.

3:00 PM

CLOSING REMARKS

A New Women's Revolution in the Making

The Asia Society's fourth annual **Women Leaders of New Asia** summit commenced with a public program, *A New Women's Revolution in the Making*, at the India International Centre, New Delhi. Chaired by Vishakha N. Desai, President Emerita of the Asia Society and Special Advisor for Global Affairs at Columbia University, the speakers included Margaret Alva, Governor of Rajasthan; Penny Low, Singaporean MP and founder of the Social Innovation Park, Ltd.; Melanne Verveer, Executive Director at the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security (GIWPS) and former U.S. Special Ambassador for Global Women's Issues; and Shirin Sharmin Choudhury, State Minister of the Ministry for Women and Children's Affairs in Bangladesh (who was sworn in as Speaker of the Bangladesh Parliament on April 30).

The panel considered a wide range of issues, beginning with a discussion of whether the world is experiencing a revolution in women's empowerment. Alva and Low expressed the belief that women are at a "moment" or "tipping point" in terms of social, economic, and political progress. However, all acknowledged that progress is slow. The participants, in their analysis of the problems in enacting change and the measures needed to do so, hit upon a common belief: that there must be "heat at the top and heat at the bottom," as Verveer termed it, in order for these measures to succeed. In other words, legislatures and corporations must take concrete actions to improve the position of women in society, but there must also be grassroots, family-focused efforts to change people's social attitudes.

LEFT TO RIGHT: Penny Low (Singapore), Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury (Bangladesh), Melanne S. Verveer (United States), Margaret Alva (India), and Vishakha N. Desai (United States)

The panel also weighed the costs and benefits of new technologies, particularly social media and reproductive technologies. Access to social media is growing, and it has proven to be a catalyst and enabler of not only social movements, but also the dissemination of ideas that women might not otherwise be exposed to. However, in Asia access is still in the growth stages. As regards reproductive technology, tools such as sex-determination technology have been misused, resulting in the reinforcement of outdated prejudices such as son preference. The unintentional misuse of this technology has skewed the sex ratio to an alarming degree in some parts of Asia.

The economic advancement of women was also a central topic of conversation. Several panelists made the argument, supported by studies, that women's economic participation is critical to job creation and growing economies. Their work in the informal sector in particular is taken for granted. To focus on the economic participation of women is "smart economics" – a goal that is not only morally right, but also strategic, and in the interest of governments and corporations. Margaret Alva raised the question of which is more effective: separate policies created specifically for the advancement of women, or wide-ranging policies – on energy, food, education, agriculture, etc. – that are aimed at advancing whole communities but incorporate the role of women.

This opening session hit upon several ideas that were discussed extensively during the summit proceedings. The effects and use of new media, public and private sector collaboration, and dual approaches – for the higher echelons of business and government, and for families and communities – were among the other important themes.

Promoting Gender Equality and Empowering Women: The Post-MDG Agenda

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are approaching their 2015 deadline. Gender equality and women's empowerment is one of the eight goals, but it is far from fulfilled. The discussion focused on the achievements and shortcomings of the MDGs, and made suggestions for amending the goals.

The session began with a discussion of expectations for new development goals, and why it is necessary to reframe the MDGs. Three areas of attention were suggested: first, there must be a goal of maintaining the safety, security, and integrity of all women, and ending violence against women. Second is the importance of choice, which comes with economic empowerment. The precursors to economic empowerment include the right to education; the protection of productive assets; reproductive rights; and access to natural resources, healthcare, and justice. Women are disproportionately impacted by a lack of access to goods and services. Third is "voice" – there must be equality and participation in both private and public spaces, and in both the private and public sectors. However, for these goals to be achieved there must be cooperation and account- ability on the part of the state. The state, and multilateral organizations like the United Nations, should be "enabler-beneficiaries" for these goals.

The question of development from an economic standpoint was also discussed in greater detail. Poverty reduc- tion and economic growth are inextricable from the advancement of women, in part because of the lack of recognition given to women's household roles and informal labor. Once again, poor women lack access to even basic resources such as healthcare and education, and often do not have control over their own incomes. The education of women is central to rectifying these problems; however, education alone is not sufficient, because women must have the opportunity to make use of the skills and knowledge they receive. Often, their work posi- tions are part-time, low-paid, and insecure, and without benefits. Thus, issues of employment rights must also be addressed. An important aspect of this is the ownership of assets – historically, women have not "owned" their own assets, which puts them in a disadvantageous position.

Data collection is one of the keys to addressing economic disparity. If there are indicators in national economic data that consider the formal and informal, paid and unpaid labor done by women, including care for children and the elderly, policymakers can create more thorough and useful agendas. Furthermore, new data will bring to light, in a quantifiable way, the fundamental gender inequality in labor, as well as its effect on productivity.

The group then considered the role of women in the private sector, and what companies themselves can and should do to clear the path for women in the corporate world. Once again, members cited a business argument: that companies performed better – by both "hard" and "soft" measures – if there were 25% or more women on their boards. The idea of a mandate was discussed positively; in Norway, for example, 40% of the members of corporate boards must be female. Furthermore, in Asia, women are a largely untapped pool of talent. However, recruiting women to corporate boards is not enough: often, there will be a drop in the number of women at a company above the middle management level. This can be attributed mostly to the "double burden" – the societal expectation for women to take care of the family and hold a job.

Companies are also complicit in making it difficult for women with families to advance beyond a certain point. Therefore, changes in mindsets are imperative – especially in Asia, where the bias against working women is

more pervasive – but change must also come from within corporations. Three practical actions recommended were ensuring a management commitment to hiring women, creating organizational enablers (such as flexible work hours and work-from-home programs), and crafting development programs for women.

Gender is central to the agenda of poverty reduction and economic growth. There must be a multilateral, wide-ranging approach to these issues, encompassing private sector initiatives, government action that is actively enforced, and campaigns to help effect attitude changes.

LEFT TO RIGHT: Gautam Kumra (India), Astrid S. Tuminez (The Philippines), and Caren Grown (United States)

A feasible **action item** from this session was to develop a presentation that laid out the business argument for women's involvement, which could then be shown to targeted companies, in efforts to have them adopt meaningful measures for the same.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Investing in data collection is critical, so that the contributions and livelihoods of women are properly understood.
  - Gender-sensitive data collection will also promote accurate asset measurement and a reduction in the gender asset gap.
- Poverty reduction is central to the women's agenda.
- The private sector should commit to reducing the "double burden" on women with family-friendly policies; government also has a complementary role in providing social infrastructure for this.
- Mandates have been successful in countries like Norway (which mandates that 40% of corporate boards be women); mandates are a way to have women in positions of power, and in the long run, may help change attitudes and mindsets.
- Governments must be made accountable for the MDGs.
- Governments should encourage corporations to integrate the MDG regarding women's empowerment into their strategic agenda – it is smart economics!
- Encouraging nations in the Asia-Pacific to incorporate women's issues into their general agendas is crucial.

Violence against Women: India as a Case Study

The fallout of the violent gang rape that occurred in Delhi on December 16, 2012, was the starting point for this session, and the participants considered violence against women from legal and practical standpoints. What are the implications of the incident and its reactions for gender violence in India and, more broadly, Asia?

This horrific incident catalyzed public opinion in a way that previous incidents of sexual violence have not. For the first time, public outrage and demonstrations on this issue became political, and earned a political response. However, in India especially, there are flaws in legislation against sexual violence (it is not inclusive

of all forms of sexual violence, such as marital rape, for example), and particularly in implementation. The increased number of rapes being reported in recent times was attributed to the societal negative reaction, particularly among men, to the economic empowerment and rising social status of women. As women increasingly begin to work outside of their homes and start earning income, men may view this as a threat and resort to

LEFT TO RIGHT: Vishakha N. Desai (United States), Indira Jaising (India)

sexual violence. There is both an institutional bias – yet again, an issue of cultural mindsets – and a problem of law enforcement accountability. A suggestion for an area of focus was UN Women's suggestions for ending violence against women: prevention, protection, prosecution, and the conviction of perpetrators.

Is the media helpful or harmful in publicizing incidents of sexual violence? On the one hand, the media can sensationalize, spread misinformation, and create fearful attitudes, which only serve to restrict the independence of women. However, it is necessary to bring attention to these issues, and social media is now an indispensible organizing tool. Further, independent media can also expose political dishonesty and flaws in policy making.

Violence against women, at its core, is about social attitudes towards women. The language of what is acceptable needs to be changed. This can only be achieved if the media, governments, and law enforcement perpetuate, through their speech and actions, the message of how women should be treated and what is not acceptable. If the attitudes of these entities remain outdated – not only in India (the case study), but anywhere – then the society's attitudes will remain the same as well. **Action items** suggested by the panel included all-female police stations; factoring women's safety into urban planning; and one-stop crisis centers such as those in South Africa, which include medical help, counseling, and legal services.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- We must consider all forms of sexual violence and harassment: public, domestic, media-based, and more.
- Legislatures and law enforcement must be made accountable, and ensure that investigations are carried through, and laws and punishments enforced, in a timely and efficient manner.
- The role of the media is important. It is a necessary tool for information and analysis, but it can also be the source of negative misrepresentations and incitement.
- Planning and infrastructure, especially for cities, must involve women – one-stop crisis centers (which offer medical help, counseling, and many other resources) are one such practical suggestion.
- Domestic violence against women must also be taken into account – it also has a negative economic impact.

Expanding Economic Opportunities for Women: A Prerequisite for Smart Economics

Economic factors are at the root of much social disparity for women. Expanding opportunities will not only result in growth, but will also foster equality at all levels of the workplace, as well as at home. The participants discussed the most pervasive obstacles to women's economic opportunities and empowerment, as well as positive practical examples to follow.

Data collection again was front and center in this conversation. The roles and participation of women must be incorporated into regular data collection by statistical agencies. As one delegate argued, data can help change the conversation. If women are invisible in data, they are often invisible in policymaking. One of the delegates quoted Ela Bhatt, founder of the Self-Employed Women's Association of India and winner of numerous awards: "If it's not measured, it's not visible." Another asset to policymaking is the presence of women in financial ministries. Typically, women in the higher reaches of government are often put in charge of "social" ministries. Once again, many participants mentioned the dearth of women in the higher echelons of corporations, technology, and even academia; the presence of women in these positions not only sets an example for future generations (of both men and women), but more importantly, increases the visibility of women as citizens, consumers, and workers.

LEFT TO RIGHT: Spenta C. Kandawalla (Pakistan), Rhodora Palomar-Fresnedi (The Philippines), Li Xin (China), and Sonal Shah (United States)

The wages and positions of women in the workplace were also discussed in depth. There is "occupational segregation" – careers seen to be the place of either men or women – and wage gaps even within those careers. Women are not given adequate opportunities to improve their skills and therefore to advance within certain industries, for example, agriculture. A major consideration in regards to this issue is access to, and information about, fair financial services for women. Ideas such as a women's bank and mezzanine financing were discussed, though some thought the former idea was problematic. There was also discussion about certain financial rights which women are not fully afforded, such as property and inheritance rights.

The opportunities for women as consumers were also explored. One participant was in strong support of encouraging innovation from businesses, and especially technology companies, for products for poor or lower class women. An example of this is mobile technology. Mobile technology is an important tool for empowering women and providing them with new skills (for instance, managing inventory in an efficient way) and access to information.

Advancing women's economic opportunities through access to financial systems, better technology, and skill building is necessary; however, it is also necessary to recognize and quantify the silent labor that women perform. **Action items** included recruiting advertising agencies and corporations to gather information and market women's issues.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Data collection is an extremely important factor. It must integrate women's issues, which are ignored by policymakers because of their absence from statistical data.

- Women's financial rights should be given more attention.

- Women should be represented not only on corporate boards, but also in government finance ministries (and traditionally "male" ministries in general).

- Innovation in the private sector is usually geared for high-end products, but there should be innovation for low-end products as well.

- The public sector and NGOs must learn from the corporate world to market and brand ideas effectively – a tool for changing mindsets.

- Mobile technology, an innovative tool for growth, must be made easily accessible to women.

The Changing Media Landscape

The session addressed new media and social media: how women use these tools and are affected by them. Questions of access and availability, female participation in media production, and the treatment of women in media were some of the themes discussed in the session.

The changing nature of media, and its uses and drawbacks, had also been discussed in previous sessions, as it pertains to many issues: development of women's economic empowerment; women in positions of power; and social and political organization in response to various issues, including violence against women.

The rapid and widespread growth of social media in Asia was a central topic of discussion. For example, India has about 130 million Internet users. Seventy million people in the country use Facebook, and these numbers largely consist of India's very large young demography. Internet access is not just limited to the rich; in India, connections are easily available on inexpensive mobile phones. In the last few years, Facebook and other social media have frequently been in the news, both for free speech and privacy rights issues, and due to their emerging power as organizational tools. Participants pointed out that social media can "give voice to the marginalized" and may be "the last bastion of the counterculture," and that it can foster a more open and transparent society.

Censorship and freedom were also considered in terms of news media. For example, the Thai Public Broadcasting Service is funded by the government, but its budget is protected. Thus, correspondents there can question the government and other powerful organizations without fear of losing financial support. Furthermore, women's and LGBT issues are covered – however, this is in part thanks to the choices made by the news editor, who is female. Having a female editor, be it in print, Internet, or television news media, affects the way stories are told, and helps shed light on previously neglected issues.

On the whole, the current media narrative is still male dominated, in terms of both writers and subjects. Social media has created a space for women to control their own narrative; however, there should also be positions in traditional media for women, so that news can accurately reflect the lives that women lead.

- Women have a role in the media space, but it is still controlled by men.

- Women have a voice in social media, which they need to exercise.

- Internet is accessible to the middle and lower income groups through mobile phones, and is a tool for organizing and bringing people together.

- Women must have editorial roles in news reporting; otherwise, their perspectives will not be considered.

- Censorship is a deterrent to growth and democracy.

Thinking Ahead with Next Generation Women Leaders

This session focused on the growing numbers of young women leaders in the public and private spheres, another topic that had been discussed as an underlying issue in previous sessions. Many of the participants, being prominent political or business leaders themselves, contributed to the discussion from a personal perspective, while also considering the larger picture.

The now-popular notion that women "hold up half the sky" was invoked at the beginning of the session. That means women should hold more leadership positions; the global average for female political representation is about 15%. This led to a mention of the importance of cultivating a network, and for women to learn to promote networking – there has been a cultural bias against doing so, especially in Asia. This topic led, once again, to the importance of role models. For example, in corporations in Indonesia, there is encouragement and

mentoring for women from the mid-level upwards, but those beginning at the lower levels of business do not have encouragement or role models. It was suggested that a broader mentoring program would help retain talent, create positive models for women to follow, and show them that there are others going through the same experience. A positive example is the Philippines, which has the narrowest gender gap in Asia. Other nations can perhaps follow the "best practices" that have been employed there.

LEFT TO RIGHT: Jade Taihee Chung (Korea) and Kalpana Raina (United States)

The issue of the glass ceiling was also addressed. Working women, in both the East and the West, encounter implicit resistance once they succeed to a certain position. At a certain age, the double burden also begins to come into play. Many women are realizing that even today these problems are extant. There was discussion that, beyond mentorship of younger working women by their elders, there should be a support relationship that goes both ways.

An important enabler of women leaders is workplace flexibility. Technology enables women to work from home without sacrificing work hours. However, companies must incorporate flexible work hours smoothly into their policy. They can also reduce the work-family burden on women by providing care options, at the workplace itself or in other ways. Encouraging entrepreneurship in women can be impactful, as it allows women to grow

independently in their careers while also having flexible time.

Multiple studies have shown that women will flourish in leadership roles if their circumstances allow it; thus, workplaces must change their policies to adjust to women's schedules. However, change must also come in social attitudes towards women's abilities to lead, and towards their roles at home. If women have role models and mentors to show that a work-life balance can be achieved, they will be more likely to move forward.

An **action item** from this session was for the participants to adopt mentees themselves, and try and encourage mentorship within their organizations or communities. Another item was, once again, to target corporations for presentations on investing in women.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Role models are very important – currently, there are not enough of them for women.
- Mentorship is necessary: both by experienced leaders of younger women, and by new leaders to help others adapt to a changing environment.
- There can and should be a network of women in these positions, collaborating on these issues.
- Women leaders face the double burden challenge, as well as the expectations of society. Infrastructure is necessary to reduce this burden on women and help change attitudes. An idea of 1+1 mentors – from different realms – was suggested.
- We need a "killer app" for gender parity.
- It is necessary to target companies and make presentations on the smart economics of investing in women.

Women Leaders in Philanthropy

Much of the discussion in this session centered around the concept of philanthropy in the Asian context, particularly the state of philanthropy in India and South Asia. The way philanthropy is institutionalized and practiced in western cultures currently does not take place in India, as the idea of philanthropy is still in very nascent stages. While there has been some positive movement in the right direction in Asia in recent times,

LEFT TO RIGHT: Michael G. Kulma (United States), Vishakha N. Desai (United States), and Kiran Nadar (India)

it is primarily due to individual efforts and those individuals' desire to "give back" to their societies, which invariably face multiple challenges such as financial sustainability.

To underscore this point, Kiran Nadar, Chairperson of the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (KNMA), recounted her family's endeavor and the challenges that they had to overcome in establishing the Sri Sivasubramaniya Nadar College of Engineering in Chennai and the KNMA in Delhi. The impetus for KNMA was the realization that there was a dearth of institutional spaces that could bring visibility to India's rich cultural heritage, and inadequate attention by government museums. KNMA is the first private museum of art exhibiting modern and contemporary works from India and the subcontinent. It was started with donated pieces from the private collection of the Chairperson of the museum, and the museum is open to the public and free of charge.

The Sri Sivasubramaniya Nadar College of Engineering is an example of education philanthropy. Scholarships are awarded to impoverished rural students to study at the college. These students are selected by the state government, based on results from board examinations, and then an entrance exam. The school has developed a strong alumni network that donates funds to perpetuate such scholarships.

While individual efforts are tremendously commendable and a real necessity in societies where philanthropy remains to be professionalized, the long-term viability of philanthropy rests in meaningful public-private partnerships. The delegates agreed that in the absence of institutions that support philanthropy or where such institutions are not adequately formalized, one has to think of creative philanthropy. One of the delegates mentioned that the new bill the Indian Parliament is debating would require companies to spend 2% of their gross earnings on their Corporate Social Responsibility programs. If this bill passes, it will have a tremendous impact on the future course of philanthropy in India, and put down a solid foundation for sustainability of philanthropic efforts in the country.

Increasing Women's Political Participation: Turning Policies into Practice

In this session, the panel looked at women in politics in Asia: how much progress have they made? What are the remaining obstacles, and solutions to those obstacles? They also considered successful best practices from other countries, and discussed the influence of social media in political organizing, as well as laws aimed to advance the position of women.

In Asia, 17% of people in politics are women; this percentage conforms to the United States average. Studies have shown that once female representation surpasses the 30% threshold, policies and budgets become more equitable for women. Asia has had a higher number of female heads of state/government than other regions – yet most have come to power through political dynasties. During the session, an argument was made for women gaining access to the political world through dynastic connections, because this practice provides other

women with role models that they have not had before; it also changes the public's perception regarding women's capabilities, and often removes their doubts. (It was also noted that many men in South Asian politics have had dynastic connections.) Further, these women are more likely to push the cause of women's issues in politics.

For similar reasons, there is support for the popular South Asian model of reservations of seats for women politicians. Moreover, though family or quotas may help women come into positions of power, they must then prove their worth in order to survive. In Bangladesh, for example, women who

LEFT TO RIGHT: Anja Manuel (United States), Michael G. Kulma (United States), and Attiya Inayatullah (Pakistan)

were elected first in reserved seats later contested, and won, direct elections. If women are elected, through whatever means, they must exercise their power and make their voices heard. To make her point, one of the delegates paraphrased Gloria Steinem: "The process of getting empowerment is taking it."

Another idea for increasing women's political participation is to mobilize grassroots communities. If women are encouraged from a young age, at a local level, to participate, and if they are given the training and support to do so, representation will increase. Even if women are motivated, they may not be accustomed to the system and structure of their specific political bodies. Thus, training – as well as capacity building and financial support – is vital. The role of political parties is important here. If a female candidate is affiliated with a certain party, she can use the party infrastructure to grow and navigate through the political maze. This also provides training for campaigns and legislating. Lobbies such as Emily's List in the United States were also suggested. These are independent agencies that select and nurture female candidates, assisting them with fundraising and other parts of the election process. USAID also has incentive funds for improving women's political participation.

Thus, a dual and complementary action of support and training, from both within and without formal political systems, can help advance women in politics. Formal support can come in the form of reservations, or quotas, for female politicians as well. A suggested action item was to document a compendium of best practices for political participation.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Though many female heads of state in Asia came to power through dynastic politics, they still provide positive role models for women and help change social attitudes towards women in politics.

- Women in grassroots communities must be mobilized to participate in politics.

- Women can grow in politics with the support of parties.

- In Asian nations, particularly South Asia (Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Nepal), quotas and reservations have proved successful for integrating women into politics, and having an effect on the number of directly contested seats.

- However, women who are elected in quota seats must use their positions to legislate independently and speak out.

- Training for female politicians, especially those unfamiliar to the political process and legislating, is critical. Training can be provided by parties, or by outside agencies like USAID and NGOs.

- It is important to form a compendium of best practices; a model to follow in Asia is Emily's List.

Looking Ahead & Next Steps

In order for the goals discussed at the conference to be realized, and for the "action items" suggested to be put into practice, there must be strategic partnerships among women who work in different fields, be they public or private. The collaboration between institutions and organizations, at all levels, is necessary to create "heat at the top and heat at the bottom."

The group discussed several of the major topics from previous sessions, and debated how to bring best practices and ideas into action. To begin with, there is the issue of media coverage and women's representation in news media. When the media does cover women's issues, it is often negative events, and does not offer solu-

tions. News media can spotlight women creating positive change, especially outside the western world; this must be encouraged and practiced. Social media can easily be used to gather support for women's issues, and be a conduit for them to enter the mainstream, and to enter politics in particular. Social media – and social marketing – can, for example, be used to further the agenda for mandated quotas.

In terms of information itself, the components of raw data must change, and be reevaluated and repackaged. This will have a significant effect on academia, policy, and public perception. The data should be presented simply, and made accessible. Panelists suggested the use of infographics and social media campaigns to disseminate this data.

Mentorship was another major theme of the conference, revisited in the final session. Women in positions of power can "adopt" mentees, to help smooth the path to success for other women.

Action items included a reiteration of the idea to create a marketing campaign for the women's agenda, focused on changing attitudes. This would involve social media advertising and viral marketing; new data can be presented in infographics. A website for women's policy was suggested as a center for this information.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- In the media, academia, and government, we must re-evaluate and repackage data – make the case for the contribution of women to the economy.
- Make data easily accessible.
- Social media and social marketing can be used to further the agenda; for example, the mandate for a reservation of women's seats.
- It was suggested that the Asia Society can have a more public WLNA summit, to be held every two years.
- The Asia Society can support a high-profile, mainstream, substantial summit for representing women in the media, similar to Women in the World.
- Mentors among women leaders are important.
- Once again, a compendium of best practices will be useful.
- The Asia Society (or other organizations) can match corporations with NGOs for advising.

Conclusion

The Women Leaders of New Asia summit considered topics as diverse as women's economic participation, violence against women, new media, and leadership in many capacities, and found that there are common inequalities in all these spheres. The delegates addressed these themes repeatedly in the sessions, and suggested wide-ranging solutions to target these inequalities. Many of their ideas came from **best practices** (which have been mentioned in each section of the report).

Much of what is holding women back in terms of participation – be it in business or politics, and from the beginning onwards – is negative **social attitudes**. A traditional, conservative idea of a women's role persists, especially in Asia, and acts as a deterrent against women's progress. Daughters and married women encounter these attitudes at home; female politicians and businesswomen encounter them as they begin to succeed in

their fields. Thus, changing social attitudes is necessary to the women's agendas, and this can only be achieved if there is **"heat at the top and heat at the bottom,"** that is, efforts at reforming beliefs not only at the national level but also in the home, in communities, and in the workplace.

There are several core ways in which this can be achieved. An all-important one is **data collection**. Data affects the thinking of academics, policymakers, and reporters, and thus of governments and non-governmental development organizations. It influences the average person's thinking as well. It is absolutely vital, then, that data must reflect the real roles of women: their unpaid or unconsidered labor, their duties and responsibilities, and so on. If the data is accurate, only then can truly useful laws and agendas be created.

Effective marketing and presentation of this data, of information relevant to the women's agenda, is also important. It demonstrated throughout the summit that focusing on women was "smart economics"; this is something that should be presented to corporations and organizations so that they can change their policies to better suit the lives of women. Similarly, a public campaign – for example, a website or social media marketing – will help influence the views of youth and citizens in general. Both these efforts can go a long way in reducing the **"double burden"** – the pressure on women to shoulder the burdens of at-home work, care for children and the elderly, and social obligations – while also working to secure an income for their families. (It also includes the burden to conform to social norms, such as marrying at a certain age or having children.) A way to ease the path for women, and show them that there are others in their position, is **mentoring**, which creates a support network for women.

In terms of increasing the number of women at all levels in politics, and at the top echelons of the corporate world, most delegates favored instituting **mandated quotas** to give women a foot in the door. Quotas have been shown in many cases to increase the number of women who enter politics and succeed in direct elections; they also create **role models** for young women and help change attitudes as to women's capabilities. In addition, having women in power draws attention to women's issues.

There is no single solution, no single law or requirement, which will help the cause of women's advancement in totality. That is why there must be action from all sectors – the government, media, NGOs, corporations, academia – that are aimed towards properly recognizing and improving the place of women in modern society. However, there must also be cooperation between these institutions. If change is visible in each of these spheres, only then will social attitudes, and the culture at large, begin to change for the better. No one sector can take on this herculean task alone. In an effort to do their bit, each of the delegates pledged to take certain actions on their own or in collaboration with others in the WLNA community.

PARTICIPANTS

AFGHANISTAN

Shinkai Karokhail, Member of Parliament, Afghan National Assembly

BANGLADESH

Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, State Minister, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

CAMBODIA

Mu Sochua, Member of Parliament, National Assembly of Cambodia

CHINA

Li Xin, Managing Editor, Caixin - China Economics & Finance

INDIA

Nisha Agrawal, CEO, Oxfam India

Margaret Alva, Governor of Rajasthan

Bunty Chand, Executive Director, Asia Society India Centre

Ankhi Das, Head of Public Policy, Facebook India

Indira Jaising, Director, Lawyers Collective Women's Rights Initiative; Former Solicitor General of India

Radha Kumar, Director of Peace & Conflict Program, Delhi Policy Group

Gautam Kumra, Director, McKinsey & Company, India

Kiran Nadar, Chairperson, Kiran Nadar Museum of Art

Lakshmi Puri, Acting Head, UN Women; Assistant Secretary-General, United Nations

Kumud Srinivasan, President, Intel India

INDONESIA

Shinto Nugroho, Head of Public Policy and Government Relations, Google Indonesia

KOREA

Jade Taihee Chung, Executive Managing Director of HR, General Electric, Korea

MONGOLIA

Oyun Sanjaasüren, Minister of Environment and Green Development, Mongolia

PARTICIPANTS (CONTINUED)

MYANMAR

Nilar Oo, Deputy Country Representative, Myanmar, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

PAKISTAN

Attiya Inayatullah, Member of Parliament, National Assembly of Pakistan

Spenta Captain Kandawalla, Director, Captain Chemical Industries (PVT) Ltd.

Tushna D. Kandawalla, General Manager, Finance, Captain P.Q. Chemical Industries

Sabeen Mahmud, Founder and Director, PeaceNiche

THE PHILIPPINES

Rhodora Palomar-Fresnedi, Senior Vice President, Unilab; Executive Director, Unilab Foundation

Astrid S. Tuminez, Regional Director, Legal and Corporate Affairs, Microsoft Southeast Asia

SINGAPORE

Penny Low, President and Founder, Social Innovation Park, Ltd.; Member of Parliament, Parliament of Singapore

THAILAND

Monnita Komolvadhin, News Editor, Thai Public Broadcasting Service

UNITED STATES

Kim K. Azzarelli, Senior Vice President, Newsweek and the Daily Beast; President, Women in the World Foundation

Vishakha N. Desai, President Emerita, Asia Society; Special Advisor for Global Affairs, Columbia University

Serena Fong, Senior Director, Government Affairs & Communications, Catalyst

Caren Grown, Senior Gender Advisor, Bureau of Policy, Planning and Learning, USAID

Michael G. Kulma, Executive Director, Global Leadership Initiatives, Asia Society

Anja Manuel, Partner, RiceHadleyGates, LLC

Sheila Marcelo, Founder & CEO, Care.com

Ann Morfogen, Communications Consultant and Director, Sony USA Foundation

Kalpana Raina, Managing Partner, 252 Solutions, LLC

Sonal Shah, Senior Fellow, Case Foundation

Melanne S. Verveer, Executive Director, Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security (GIWPS)

Wenchi Yu, Senior Advisor, Secretary's Office of Global Women's Issues, U.S. Department of State

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