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SNEF

Fostering female talent in the workplace:

Asia-Pacific Regional Conference on
Women in business and management
Singapore, 3 July 2015

**Conference
Report**

Acknowledgements	3
Background	4
Introduction to the conference in the Asia-Pacific region	6
Organization	7
Opening session	8
Panel 1: Understanding the challenges in attracting and retaining female talent in the Asia-Pacific region	14
Panel 2: The business and economic case for gender diversity and women’s leadership in the workplace in the Asia-Pacific region	21
Panel 3: Presenting solutions in leveling the playing field for women and men in the Asia-Pacific region	28
Conclusion	34
Annex 1 Agenda	36
Annex 2 Polling the audience	38
Annex 3 Factsheet	42

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Furthermore the presence and support of representatives from employers’ organizations in the region who contributed to the success of the event:

- Employers’ Confederation of Philippines
- Employers Confederation of Thailand
- Fiji Enterprise and Commerce Federation
- Cambodian Federation of Employers and Business Associations
- Employers Association of Indonesia
- Employers Federation of Ceylon
- Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- Malaysian Employers Federation
- China Enterprise Confederation
- Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- Iranian Confederation of Employers’ Associations
- Employers’ Federation of Pakistan
- Bangladesh Employers’ Federation
- Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry
- Korea Employers Federation

Finally, acknowledgement of the Norway-ILO Partnership Cooperation Agreement is due for the provision of the funds necessary for this conference and related activities.



Deborah France-Massin
Director, Bureau for Employers’ Activities
International Labour Organization

Background



In 2013 the International Labour Organization (ILO) Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP) conducted a global survey with approximately 1,300 private sector companies in 39 emerging countries across five regions to strengthen the knowledge base of employers through research, documentation of good practices and sharing of experiences within and between regions. The research culminated into the ILO Global Report on *Women in Business and Management: Gaining Momentum*¹, which was launched in January 2015.

As a direct follow-up to the report, the ILO organized an international conference on *Reflecting global change: Women in Business and Management* in collaboration with the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) at its headquarters in London in April 2015. The conference brought together constituents from businesses and their representative organizations with experts and practitioners from around the world to identify critical steps to accelerate the advancement of women in business and management and to share solutions for driving better business results.

Building on the momentum created from the global initiative, the ILO took an additional step to examine the situation, statistics and company policies and practices to promote women in management in Asia and the Pacific; a region where women's growing presence in the labour market is becoming a driver for economic growth and development. The report on *Women in business and management: Gaining momentum in Asia and the Pacific*² offers region-specific data and information on women in business and management and complements the findings and messages of the global report.

The regional report signifies the need to maximize the use of female talent in the Asia-Pacific region, especially at a time when talent and skill shortages are restricting business growth. Some of the main findings of the report are:

- In around 55 per cent of companies surveyed, women represented 10 per cent or less of senior managers, or the companies had not appointed any women at the senior management level.
- Women make up little more than 5 per cent of chief executive officers (CEOs) of publicly listed companies.
- The data clearly illustrate that women seldom hold top management positions and are concentrated in specific types of management and occupations.
- Based on available data, there are three countries in the Asia-Pacific region in which more than 5 per cent of CEOs are women, namely China, New Zealand and Viet Nam.
- In the public sector, Mongolia, New Zealand and the Philippines are among the 22 countries worldwide where 40 per cent or more of legislators, senior officials and managers are women.
- Women today are better educated. In 11 of the 24 countries for which data were available, women were the majority of all tertiary graduates and students. Yet, 50 per cent of businesses in the region reported that the retention of women in the workplace was a problem.
- Women own or manage approximately 30 per cent of all businesses ranging from self-employed (or own account workers), micro- and small enterprises to medium and large companies.

¹ILO. 2015. Women in Business and Management: Gaining momentum
(http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_316450.pdf)

²ILO. 2015. Women in Business and Management: Gaining momentum in Asia and the Pacific
(http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_379571.pdf)

Introduction to the conference in the Asia-Pacific region

The Asia Pacific regional conference on *Fostering female talent in the workplace: Women in business and management* was held in collaboration with the ILO and the Singapore National Employers Federation (SNEF) on 3 July 2015 in Singapore. It brought together over 260 international experts, academics, company representatives, representative organizations of business and other stakeholders to provide an overview of opportunities and challenges faced in attracting and retaining female talent as well as sharing of trends and best practices.

The panels consisted of national employers' organization representatives, company representatives from businesses in Singapore and the Asia-Pacific region, and international experts. Experienced BBC journalist, Ms Sharanjit Leyl, moderated the panels. The conference aimed to do the following:

- Provide an opportunity to present the regional report *Women in business and management: Gaining momentum in Asia and the Pacific*, with the latest regional data and information.
- Provide a platform for international experts to share trends and practices in the region, and for employers' organizations and companies to highlight best practices in the region.
- Assist employers' organizations from across the Asia-Pacific region in the formulation and implementation of employers' policies and actions to enhance women's participation in management and decision-making as a strategic business goal; and
- Highlight good practices and policy initiatives from business communities in Singapore and the Asia-Pacific region, as well as the international business community.



Organization

The conference was organized in partnership with the SNEF, an employers' organization active in the promoting women in business and management. The Federation has a large membership base and is a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Confederation of Employers (ACE). The SNEF actively engages with its member companies and stakeholders on women in business issues through supporting the National Diversity Task Force, taking part in tripartite working groups on enhancing employment choices for women, assisting the Government of Singapore to design flexible workplace programmes and conducting research on the issue.

Opening Session Participants



Guest of Honour
Ms. Amy Khor
Senior Minister of State,
Ministry of Health,
Ministry of Manpower, and
Deputy Government Whip



Key note speaker
Mr. Ho Kwon Ping
Executive Chairman,
Banyan Tree Holdings,
President of Wah Chang/
Thai Wah Group of
Companies, and Chairman,
Board of Trustees,
Singapore Management
University



Asia-Pacific overview
Ms. Deborah France-Massin
Director, Bureau for
Employers' Activities (ACT/
EMP), International Labour
Organization

Key themes

- Work life integration
- Women in the changing world of work
- Importance of data driven understanding
- Public, private and personal support are all key elements of creating an conducive working environment for women
- Key findings of ILO report on *Women in business and management: Gaining momentum in Asia and the Pacific*



Amy Khor, Senior Minister of State for the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Manpower, opened the conference by touching on the progress made by Singapore in educating women and the subsequent increase in the participation of women in the labour force. Nevertheless, female representation on boards and in executive management as remained low. This phenomenon, referred to as the 'leaking pipeline', is not unique to Singapore, as reflected in the ILO report on women in management in the Asia-Pacific region. Ultimately the conversation about expanding and optimizing the talent pool is of particular importance to Singapore given low birth rates and an ageing population. She noted that soon women will control three-quarters of discretionary spending worldwide and companies need to take into account the views of women, particularly through more diverse boards given the link between gender diversity and better business performance. More



needs to be done to promote women, particularly in leadership. To achieve this the public and private sectors need to work together to support and encourage women in the workforce by ensuring access to maternity and paternity leave and child care while the private sector must implement more flexible working environments to support parents. Government should provide the 'hardware', but companies need to provide the 'software', such as human resources policies to attract and promote women, including reducing reliance on the 'old boys network'. Without, family and societal support it remains difficult for women to balance work-life demands. A key message from her remarks was that ultimately, **private, public and personal realms need to work together to support women and help everyone maximize their potential regardless of gender.**



Ho Kwon Ping, Executive Chairman, Banyan Tree Holdings, gave the keynote address highlighting that fast changes are happening in the world of work for women. He cautioned that change in the form of mandatory quotas shouldn't be the primary means of promoting women in business as it undermines the real value of diversity and amounts to simplistic rigidity. A greater number of positive incentives provided by society and industry, and voluntary targets set by companies could provide a slower but lasting solution. The harsh reality is that the world of work until this point has amounted to a sacrifice of family and personal life (most of the time for women) given the constraints of the traditional work environment, such as the 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. work schedule, which is not conducive to the needs of employees who have family care obligations in addition to their career. However, change is on the horizon creating the opportunity for **work-life integration** where people can shift between work and family life, and where productivity is measure in tasks achieved and not by presence during office hours. He stated that technology is becoming a game changer in enabling **work-life fit** whereby, depending on the phase of a person's life, the balance between work and life can evolve. Technology enables the ratio of work to life in different phases of life to change, allowing employees to customize the work-life fit throughout their working lives. The companies that recognize the new world of work and build the human resources scaffolding that will allow all workers to perform to their

best attributes will gain a competitive advantage. Companies should look towards a workplace where the full potential of all workers can be realized. Companies have shown they know how to "talk the talk" about gender diversity yet "walking the walk" remains another matter; societies need to work on walking that path together to achieve gender diversity.

Breaking the glass ceiling in Banyan Tree Holdings

- Women comprise of between 30 per cent and 50 per cent of the board at any time.
- Women are 45 per cent of the top 100 executives.
- Women are 40 per cent of the top 250 middle managers.
- The head of the Banyan Tree's project management division – which is normally considered a male domain – is a woman.
- Banyan Tree was the first luxury hotel in Thailand to appoint a woman as the general manager.



countries often creating a “double burden” for working women. She went on to highlight some key statistics from the ILO’s Women in business and management: Gaining momentum in Asia and the Pacific report, including the growing number of women in business, the persisting gender pay gaps and indicated that many of the companies surveyed from the region did not feel promoting women was a human resource priority. From a business perspective, there is a lot of untapped talent in Asia-Pacific, where the level of education is rising yet women remain concentrated at more junior levels, and this ultimately has economic implications.

Key messages for moving the agenda forward

- Progress has been made but more must be done as glass ceilings and walls remain in place.
- There is a need to put knowledge into practice and “walk the walk” and share good practice.
- The whole world of work is changing, the future of work is already here and it is affecting women and men in the workplace. Technology may finally enable employees to achieve work-life fit, in workplaces that evolve to measure tasks as opposed to time in the office or more traditional measures of productivity.
- Systems (public, private and personal) need to be in place and need to be harmonized to support employees to achieve work-life integration and work-life fit.



In the session on key trends for women in business and management in Asia-Pacific and globally **Deborah France-Massin, the Director of the ILO’s ACT/EMP**, explained that one of the key tasks of the ILO is advocacy, and based on the work that had taken place, ACT/EMP looked to establish whether the advocacy around gender diversity had resulted in changes through putting together a fact-based key reference document at a global and regional level to measure the progress. The global report showed that there has been progress the percentage of women in management has increased. However, it is clear that the glass ceiling is cracked but there are still glass walls, where educated women are still concentrated in certain types of management functions. Gender stereotyping is still real and pervasive, as a result of unconscious (or conscious) bias, even at the level of recruitment. In addition, family responsibilities are still mainly assigned to women in most

Panel 1: Understanding the challenges in attracting and retaining female talent in the Asia-Pacific region

Participants



Ms. Jessica Tan

Managing Director,
Microsoft Singapore
Member of Parliament



Ms. Evangeline Chua

Head of Human Resources,
Citi Singapore



Mr. Bob Tan

Co-Chair of the Tripartite
Alliance for Fair and
Progressive Employment
Practices (TAFEP); Chair,
Jurong Engineering Limited



Ms. Amy Luinstra

Senior Operations Officer
– Gender, International
Finance Corporation

Key themes

- Gender bias
- The leaking pipeline
- Retention of women
- Tools for the promotion of women
- Empowering men to take more family responsibility





Attracting and retaining women

The panel all stressed that **it is more difficult to retain women throughout their careers than it is to attract them in the beginning**, as women are often faced with choices in conflict with their employment, particularly to do with family. Amy Luinstra indicated that companies should look at their own data to understand how, when and why women are leaving as this differs from company to company. The solution should be broader than just women, for instance flexible work arrangements should apply to men and women. Policies, work arrangements and enabling technology should support the workforce, both women and men, to enable a better balance of work and family commitments. Given these changes, **performance metrics also need to change**. For example, in promoting flexible work arrangements, performance management should be based on deliverables rather than time spent in the office. The panel also discussed the gender wage gaps as a factor keeping women from returning to the workplace if they leave for family care reasons. There are explained and unexplained gaps, where bias largely accounts for the unexplained gaps. Amy Luinstra indicated that one manifestation of the gender wage gap may be a self-fulfilling prophecy as couples may elect the partner that earns more to stay in the workplace when family care obligations require that one partner leave the workforce. To avoid this self-fulfilling prophecy, it is important to review company data to see if all employees are being paid equally for work of equal value.

Quotas

Because it is important to have the best person for the job, the panel indicated that for the most part they are not supportive of quotas, while remembering that diversity of ideas and perspectives can add considerably to better overall outcomes. Evangeline Chua highlighted that it is more important to develop a pipeline that leads to the highest levels of management and to exert conscious, deliberate effort and focus on **keeping women in the pipeline**. This extends not

only to gender diversity but also to the tendency to recruit within a narrow range, such as graduates of particular education institutions or who have specific training and management backgrounds. Amy Luinstra indicated that the context is also important; there are some country contexts that may require quotas in order to shift perceptions.

Overcoming socio-behavioural norms

Evangeline Chua told how she was promoted into her current role, to illustrate that it is also **important for women to self-nominate**. Women often readily nominate themselves for new roles or higher positions. She stressed that women need to be brave and confident in their capability even if they may not feel completely ready. The panel highlighted **the role of mentoring** by indicating that **empowered women need to bring other women along with them as they progress in their career**. In particular, Jessica Tan noted the importance of networking. It is often said that women do not have time for networking, but they need to make the time to build a strong professional network. Women need to be conscious of widening their networks to derive the greatest value from this asset.

Conscious and unconscious biases

Amy Luinstra highlighted the power of social norms by using the analogy of rowing a boat in against the current of societal expectations. Going against societal expectations can be very difficult; therefore, **collective conversations can provide tremendous support for incremental changes that ultimately result in changed mindsets**. The panel stressed that changing mindsets takes time. Jessica Tan noted that women leave the workforce as a result of stereotyping; ultimately they feel they have to leave because of family responsibilities. Women often buy into these biases or are encouraged by family members, and they leave the workforce despite wanting to stay. She indicated that **support**

is also needed to help women who want or need to be able to take time out from the workplace, and want come back, to keep contact with the workforce.

Attitude change

To change attitudes, in the first place, businesses should ensure their policies support gender diversity and should then conduct training to confront biases. Unconscious bias may not be motivated by ill intent; therefore **education and policy have an important role to play**. Amy Luinstra pointed to the need for training on unconscious bias in particular. Without awareness and effort to address the bias, the status quo will simply be maintained. She also highlighted the case of Pacific countries where extreme bias exists and the labour market participation of women is very low, but where there is increasingly an economic imperative for women to join the workforce. Engaging the whole family on the issue of gender bias is important to change attitudes and move beyond stereotypes.

Work-life balance

To achieve work-life balance, Evangeline Chua recommended aligning one's choices with one's priorities and the priorities of others. There is a degree of choice in balancing work and family, and one has to be able to choose to switch off from work when necessary. Amy Luinstra indicated that paternity leave can help to achieve work-life balance, setting in motion patterns in a child's early years that help fathers to be and stay engaged. Jessica Tan indicated that the care of older people is also becoming increasingly important and family care leave needs to be provided equally to women and men.

Key messages for moving the agenda forward

- More needs to be done to retain women in the workforce.
- Flexible work arrangements should be made available to both men and women.
- Social norms are very powerful and collective conversations can be useful in changing them, even in increments.
- Unconscious bias needs to be addressed to avoid perpetuating the status quo.
- Data can show what is happening within a company in terms of retaining women and the leaking pipeline. It is important to understand the gaps at an individual company level.
- Conscious and deliberate effort should be made to keep women in the pipeline that leads to senior management positions.
- Different solutions are necessary in different contexts. While quotas may not serve the overall purpose of having the most talented person for the job, in some contexts where there is little support for gender diversity, quotas can be a starting point.

Panel 2: The business and economic case for gender diversity and women's leadership in the workplace in the Asia-Pacific region

Participants



Ms. Marife Zamora

Chair, Convergys, Philippines



Ms. Janet Ang

Vice President, Systems of Engagement and Smarter Cities, IBM Asia-Pacific region



Ms. Kelly Sofian

Senior Director Quality and Human Resources, Systems on Silicon Manufacturing Company (SSMC)



Ms. Kate Carnell

CEO, Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI)



Key themes

- The link between gender diversity and company performance
- Women on boards
- Gender diversity as a company priority
- Enabling environments including company and government policy as well as mentoring, hiring and succession planning

Panel 2 discussed the business and economic case for gender diversity and women's leadership in the workplace in the Asia-Pacific region as a key to business success. There is an increasing amount of evidence on the business benefits of gender diversity, including increased access to skills and talent, greater understanding of a consumer market increasingly driven by women, increased innovation and creativity due to diverse inputs and thinking, and improved corporate governance. In addition, looking more broadly, demographic factors suggest that the increased labour market participation of women is necessary to sustain growth. In Japan and the Republic of Korea where rates of female labour force participation are low, women's increased participation could substantially contribute to economic growth. Future generations of young female leaders will continue to contribute to business success, fill skills gaps and contribute to a company's competitive edge.

The business case

The panellists briefly discussed research indicating that more gender-diverse companies perform better. The research is particularly clear when it comes to women on boards. In addition, the increasing purchasing power of women means that incorporating the views of women into company decision-making leads to a better understanding of the marketplace. **Better gender balance leads to a better bottom line.** Kate Carnell emphasized the benefits of gender diversity for business success are sufficiently clear to assert that **companies are not acting in the interests of shareholders if they are not focusing on gender diversity.**

Getting to diversity and encouraging women to step forward

Gender-balanced interview panels play a strong role in ensuring gender diversity in the workplace, as highlighted by Janet Ang and Kate Carnell. The panel also echoed the importance of having similar numbers of men and women shortlisted for job opportunities to assist human resources officers in thinking outside of the box and ensuring that both women and men are considered for positions. Janet Ang said that targets and succession planning were important interventions, with policies and programmes in place to help achieve targets.

The point was raised that it is important for women to step forward, a point that was also made by Panel 1. Janet Ang and Kate Carnell stressed that women should not wait for optimal timing, that women should be willing to take on new responsibilities even if those opportunities arise at inopportune times. They also stressed that no one ever feels completely ready but **it is important for women to be willing to stretch beyond their comfort zone.** Businesses should work with female employees to prepare them for new responsibilities, and provide them with job rotation or mentoring opportunities so they gain exposure throughout their careers. Kate Carnell stressed that **small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) often**

Highlighting country successes

Kate Carnell stated that the participation of women in the workforce in Australia remains low compared to men. If Australia were to reduce by half the difference in participation between men and women, there could be a 26 per cent increase in gross domestic product (GDP). Access to affordable child care and effective tax rates are key to making it worthwhile for women to remain in the workplace. Therefore, **policy settings need to be adjusted to achieve the desired outcomes.** The Australian Human Rights Commission has involved men in the process by creating a group called Male Champions of Change. The group uses individual or collective leadership to elevate gender equality as an issue of national and international social and economic importance. Men involved in the group are influential business figures that, through their actions, ensure that gender diversity remains on the national business agenda. They support only those events where women are sufficiently represented, and they are also committed to promoting change within their own companies.



Within Singapore, Janet Ang, indicated the focus on tripartism in Singapore has been effective in creating an environment that supports women to balance family and career. Enacting flexible working arrangements, ensuring that there are programmes in place to support the advancement of women and creating ambassadors of change are all part of creating an enabling environment for gender equality.

Progress through the pipeline

Kelly Sofian highlighted that supporting women to return to the workplace is also a key aspect of achieving gender equality. When women need to take time out, they are more likely to have the confidence to come back after a prolonged absence if they maintain labour force connections or have keep up-to-date in their field. The panel also pointed to the need for milestones and reporting to ensure that women progress through the pipeline leading to the highest levels of management. Kate Carnell suggested that businesses make gender diversity a standard reporting item on meeting agendas, similar to health and safety.

Key messages for moving the agenda forward

- The business case is clear: gender diversity should now be part and parcel of business objectives. Speaking about gender diversity ultimately amounts to a discussion about better business performance.
- Incorporating women's voices into decision-making leads to a better understanding of the marketplace.
- Governmental support structures are required to help businesses achieve the objectives of gender equality.
- Gender diversity needs to be measured and targets need to be set. This ensures changes are made beginning with the recruitment level and requires careful succession planning.
- Men are key to driving the agenda forward while women need to step forward and take on new responsibilities.
- In the case of SMEs, additional support from larger companies and business organizations would help them understand the business case for gender diversity

Panel 3: Presenting solutions in leveling the playing field for women and men in the Asia-Pacific region

Participants



Ms Shinta Widjaja Kamdani

CEO Sintesa Group;
Vice Chair, Employers' Association of Indonesia



Mr John Gethin-Jones

Managing Director, NCS
Papua New Guinea



Dr Shahida Sajjad

Board Member, Employers' Federation of Pakistan, and Dean, Faculty of Education, Federal Urdu University of Arts Science and Technology



Mr Howard Politini

President, Fiji Commerce and Employers Federation; General Manager Microfinance, Government and Community Relations, Bank of the South Pacific, Fiji



Ms Clara Goh

Asia Treasury Director, Asia Pacific Region; Chair, Women's Leadership Development Committee, UPS Singapore



Key themes

- The role of education
- The applicability of quotas
- Role of employers' organizations
- Public policy



Today women are still under-represented in senior and executive management positions. Despite some progress, women are often concentrated at junior levels or in specific occupations and find it difficult to break through glass ceilings and walls. Companies are realizing the benefits of promoting women in business and management but the pace of change remains slow. Many companies face skills shortages that could be overcome if female talent was not underutilized. There are a number of things that companies can do to change perceptions, promote women and achieve gender diversity. These include addressing systemic barriers to women's advancement to leadership positions such as the lack of flexible work solutions and the lack of female role models, gender bias in hiring, gender pay gaps, and the equal distribution of family responsibilities between men and women. Ultimately, changes are necessary to correct imbalances and create a new way forward. Panel 3 focused on presenting solutions in leveling the playing field for women and men in the Asia-Pacific region.

Solutions

Howard Politini recommended starting by looking at the context and understanding the environment in which the company operates. **Different measures are necessary depending on the environment.** Clara Goh noted that the culture at UPS rewards transparency in performance measurement and hiring. UPS Business Resource Groups serve as extensions of the company's Diversity and Inclusion strategy and include a dedicated initiative on Women's Leadership Development. They also offer training and skills development, and opportunities for employees

to expand their professional networks. Both Shahida Sajjad and Howard Politini indicated that their national employers' organizations assist women business owners through women entrepreneurs' councils that work to keep gender diversity on the national business agenda.

Where to begin and fundamental changes necessary to build momentum

Shahida Sajjad highlighted the case of Pakistan, where gender stereotyping is ingrained in society. The first step should be to change mindsets. She spoke about the **fundamental role of education in changing perceptions** that would ultimately lead to tangible change. A clear message from the panellists was that senior leaders should 'walk the walk' and make an open commitment to gender diversity and female empowerment. Shinta Widjaja Kamdani described her experience taking over a company with a corporate culture previously dominated by men. Creating communication channels enabled greater education of male employees on gender diversity, and also enabled the company to learn that, contrary to stereotypes, male employees welcome opportunities to be more involved in family life if flexible arrangements are provided.

On the topic of quotas as a solution to gender diversity, Howard Politini cautioned that there needs to be a starting point. Quota that represents a minimum standard and become a measured outcome have a role to play, but changes need to extend beyond quotas. Ultimately he stressed that structure, strategy and targets are important aspects to have in place. Shahida Sajjad indicated that quotas for the private sector in Pakistan might also be helpful in prompting and encouraging wider societal change and acceptance of women in the workplace. However, John Gethin-Jones added that instead of quotas, aspirational targets set by companies themselves are important for promoting change.

Some of the panellists picked up on a point raised by Panel 2 and reiterated that oftentimes multinational companies are able to champion gender diversity but SMEs may lack resources, flexibility or knowledge of best practice. Therefore, employers' organizations or coalitions should transfer knowledge and model best practice for national companies and SMEs. Shinta Widjaja Kamdani indicated that she had founded an angel investment network to support women entrepreneurs and Howard Politini noted to the increasingly active role of the Fiji Commerce and Employers' Federation's Women Entrepreneurs Business Council in supporting women entrepreneurs.

The role of government

Conducive regulations are an important part of scaling up change. Shinta Widjaja Kamdani stated that in some Asian countries, a women entrepreneurs need their husband's signature in order to apply for financing. Thus, in some contexts, regulations do not support women in business and management. She went on to stress that the private sector and employers' organizations need to work with governments to ensure that reforming discriminatory regulations is a priority and to provide them with the solutions. John Gethin-Jones indicated that government cooperation is important, but that the private sector should not be reactive to government action. In some countries legislation changes infrequently and, therefore, the commercial world needs to take the lead. He indicated that a key intervention on the part of companies is to support women that are promoted to more senior positions and to ensure that policies within the organization are aligned in order to avoid barriers women's leadership and foster gender diversity.

Key messages for moving the agenda forward

- Education is a key in tackling gender stereotypes and preparing women for the workplace.
- Knowledge sharing and transference from larger companies to smaller businesses can be an important tool to accelerate change.
- There needs to be a starting point which could come in the form of a minimum standard or an aspirational target.
- Targets need to be set and measured to ensure progress.
- While government policy and regulatory environments are important, the private sector should proactively work to establish policies and practices at the organizational level.



Conclusion

Deborah France-Massin closed the conference by thanking the Singapore National Employers Federation for partnering with the ILO and for their work in making the conference a success. She thanked the panelists for their important contribution and noted that there were a variety of perspectives communicated throughout the day with a key message being that gender diversity in the workplace is ultimately a good business practice that delivers better business results. Given the war for talent and the changes in the world of work it is becoming increasingly important to look at gender diversity. Deborah France-Massin indicated that ACT/EMP would continue to work with employers' organizations from the region to learn more about and disseminate best practice, engage more on the topic of gender equality and to transfer the messages from today's conference beyond multinational companies to SMEs. The discussion and key messages from the conference will help to take gender diversity forward and scale up change.

Overall, the conference pointed out that while much progress has been made there is still a need for continued effort to promote change. These efforts should include addressing unconscious bias, focusing on female talent retention to prevent leaks, enabling better work life integration by extending flexible work arrangements to both women and men, taking company and country contexts into account, and ensuring company action while promoting regulatory and policy change. Given that women's participation in the labour market is imperative for economic success companies and countries should capitalize on the momentum gained and accelerate the rate of change.

Agenda

FOSTERING FEMALE TALENT IN THE WORKFORCE: WOMEN IN BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT

ILO Asia-Pacific Regional Conference, 3 July 2015
Atrium Ballroom, Holiday Inn Singapore Atrium

08.30-09.15

Arrival and registration

09.15-09.30 (15mins)

Guest-of-Honour: Dr Amy Khor
Senior Minister of State,
Ministry of Health, Ministry of Manpower,
and Deputy Government Whip

09.30-10.00 (30mins)

Key-note speaker: Mr Ho Kwon Ping
Executive Chairman, Banyan Tree Holdings,
President of Wah Chang/Thai Wah Group
of Companies, and Chairman, Board of
Trustees, Singapore Management University

10.00-10.30 (30mins)

Key trends for women in business and
management in Asia-Pacific and globally
Ms Deborah France-Massin (United
Kingdom) Director, Bureau for Employers'
Activities (ACT/EMP), International Labour
Organization

10.30-11.00 BREAK

11.00-12.30 (90mins)

**Panel 1 Title: Understanding the
challenges in attracting and retaining
female talent in Asia-Pacific.**

Panel discussants:

1. Ms Jessica Tan, Managing Director, Microsoft Singapore, and Member of Parliament
 2. Ms Evangeline Chua, Head of Human Resources, Citi Singapore
 3. Mr Bob Tan, Co-Chair of Tripartite Alliance for Fair and Progressive Employment Practices (TAFEP), and Chairman, Jurong Engineering Limited
 4. Ms Amy Luinstra, Senior Operations Officer – Gender, International Finance Corporation
- Moderator: Ms Sharanjit Leyl

12.30-13.30 LUNCH

13.30-15.00 (90mins)

**Panel 2 Title: The business and economic
case for gender diversity and women's
leadership in the workplace in Asia-Pacific.**

Panel discussants:

1. Ms Marife Zamora, Chairperson, Convergys Philippines Services Corporation
2. Ms Kate Carnell, CEO, Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI)
3. Ms Janet Ang, Vice President, Systems of

Engagement & Smarter Cities, IBM Asia Pacific
4. Ms Kelly Sofian, Senior Director Quality and Human Resources, Systems on Silicon Manufacturing Company (SSMC)
Moderator: Ms Sharanjit Leyl

15.00-15.30 BREAK

15.30-16.45 (75mins)

**Panel 3 Title: Presenting solutions in
leveling the playing field for women and
men in the Asia-Pacific region.**

Panel discussants:

1. Ms Shinta Widjaja Kamdani, CEO, Sintesa Group, and Vice Chairwoman, Employers' Association of Indonesia (APINDO)
 2. Mr John Gethin-Jones, Managing Director, NCS Papua New Guinea.
 3. Dr Shahida Sajjad, Board Member, Employers' Federation of Pakistan, and Dean, Faculty of Education, Federal Urdu University of Arts Science & Technology
 4. Ms Clara Goh, Asia Treasury Director, Asia Pacific Region, and Chairwoman of the Women's Leadership Development Committee, UPS Singapore.
 5. Mr Howard Politini, President, Fiji Commerce and Employers Federation, and General Manager of HR, Bank of South Pacific, Fiji.
- Moderator: Ms Sharanjit Leyl**

16.45-17:00 (15mins)

Closing address:
Ms Deborah France-Massin (United Kingdom)
Director, Bureau of Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP), International Labour Organization

Polling the audience

At the beginning of panel one and panel three a series of questions were asked of the audience. The audience voted via an online system called Pigeonhole. Some of the questions referred specifically to the Singaporean context, others to Asia-Pacific and some questions were repeated from the London Conference *Reflecting global change: Women in business and management* in order to compare the results.

Panel 1: Challenges

1. The gender wage gap can be explained by:

- a. Perceptions that women only earn second household incomes.
- b. Job segregation (for example, women predominantly in communications, men predominantly in business).
- c. Both (Correct answer).
- d. Neither.

50 per cent of respondents in London answered "both" and a further 29 per cent believed it was job segregation. In Singapore 75.9 per cent of the audience answered "both."

2. All criteria being equal, the highest salaries are given to:

- a. Men without children.
- b. Women without children.
- c. Men with children (Correct answer).
- d. Women with children.

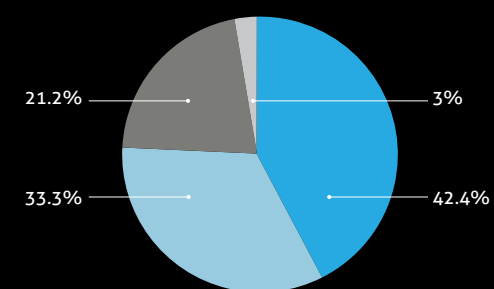
In both Singapore and London majority of respondents answer this question correctly.

3. What percentage of women are part of the workforce in Singapore?

The answers submitted by the participants in the conference are depicted in figure 1.

- a. 45 %
- b. 55 %
- c. 65 % (Correct answer)
- d. 75 %

Figure 1. Workforce - Singapore answer breakdown



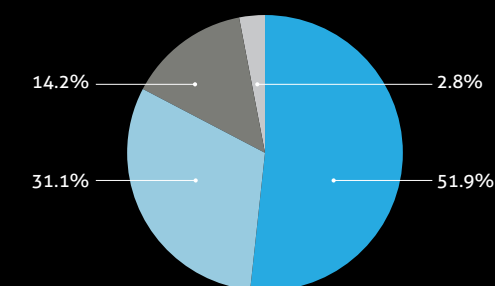
- 42.4% of Singaporeans think 45%.
- 33.3% of Singaporeans think 55%.
- 21.2% of Singaporeans think 65%.
- 3% of Singaporeans think 75%.

4. For every dollar a women earns in Singapore a man earns...

- a. US\$1
- b. \$1.20
- c. \$ 1.56 (Correct answer)
- d. \$ 2.13

The answers submitted by the participants in the conference are depicted in figure 2.

Figure 2. Gender pay gap - Singapore answer breakdown



- 51.9% of Singaporeans think \$1.56.
- 31.10% of Singaporeans think \$1.20.
- 14.20% of Singaporeans think \$2.13.
- 2.8% of Singaporeans think \$1.

Panel 3: Solutions

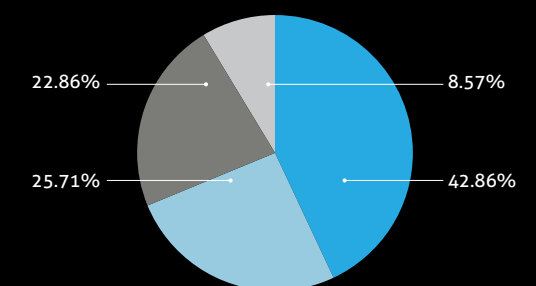
Participants in the conference were invited to answer the questions given below.

1. What measures do you think have been or will be successful in Asia-Pacific to promote women's representation?

- a. Quotas set by government.
- b. Corporate governance code with explicit mention of gender diversity.
- c. Disclosure requirements by stock exchanges.
- d. Private sector commitments to voluntary women in board targets.

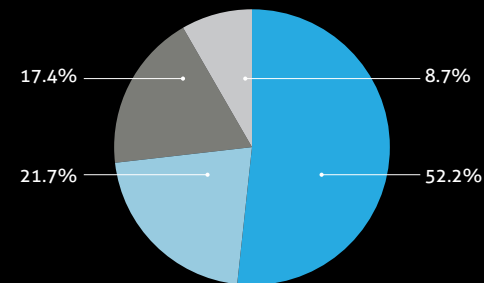
Figures 3 and 4 depict the answer submitted by the audience in London and in Singapore.

Figure 3. Measures - London answers breakdown



- 42.86% of Londoners think corporate governance code with explicit mention of gender diversity.
- 25.71% of Londoners think private sector commitments to voluntary women in board targets.
- 22.86% of Londoners think quotas set by government.
- 8.57% of Londoners think disclosure requirements by stock exchange.

Figure 4. Measures - Singapore answers breakdown



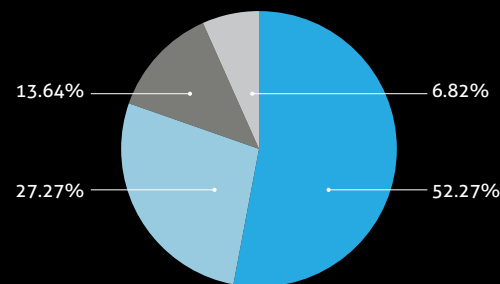
- 52.2% of Singaporeans think corporate governance code with explicit mention of gender diversity.
- 21.7% of Singaporeans think private sector commitments to voluntary women in board targets.
- 17.4% of Singaporeans think quotas set by government.
- 8.7% of Singaporeans think disclosure requirements by stock exchange.

2. What does flexible working mean to you?

- a. Being able to work from home.
- b. Being able to change the hours of your working day.
- c. Being able to work five days in four.
- d. Being able to take time off whenever you want to.

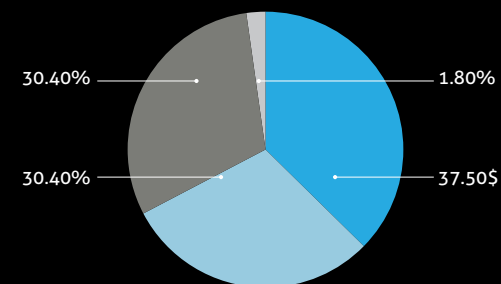
Figures 5 and 6 depict the answer submitted by the audience in London and in Singapore.

Figure 5. Flexible working arrangements - London answers breakdown



- 52.27 % of Londoners think being able to change the hours of your working day.
- 27.27% of Londoners think being able to work from home.
- 13.64% of Londoners think being able to take time of whenever you want to.
- 6.82% of Londoners think being able to work five days in four.

Figure 6. Flexible working arrangements - Singapore answers breakdown



- 37.50 % of Singaporeans think being able to change the hours of your working day.
- 30.40% of Singaporeans think being able to work from home.
- 30.40% of Singaporeans think being able to take time of whenever you want to.
- 1.80% of Singaporeans think being able to work five days in four.

3. Asia and the Pacific is one of the regions where women as employers is growing

- a. True (Correct answer)
- b. False

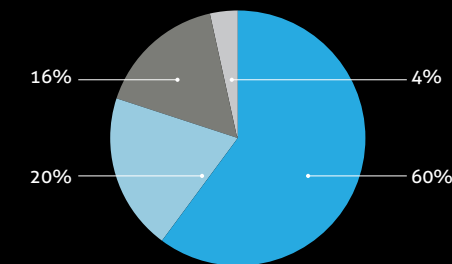
Some 90 per cent of the audience answered this question correctly.

4. What percentage of companies in Singapore have only male boards?

- a. 30 %
- b. 55 % (Correct answer)
- c. 26 %
- d. 35 %

The answers submitted by the participants in the conference are depicted in figure 7.

Figure 7. Board composition - Singapore answer breakdown



60% of Singaporeans think 55%.
20% of Singaporeans think 35%.
16% of Singaporeans think 26%.
4% of Singaporeans think 30%.

Factsheet - SIDE A

TOP 10 MEASURES FOR COMPANIES TO PROMOTE WOMEN IN MANAGEMENT

As identified in the ILO company survey

- Assigning women managers visible and challenging tasks
- Exposing women to all company operations and functions
- Mentoring scheme
- Top level management support for a gender equality strategy
- Executive training for women
- Recognition and support for women
- Making corporate culture more inclusive of both women and men
- Awareness training for senior managers on the business case for more women in management
- Setting of targets and tracking progress
- Flexible working arrangements (time and place)

TOP 10 STRATEGIES FOR BUSINESS MEMBERSHIP ORGANIZATIONS TO ADVANCE WOMEN IN BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT

As identified in the ILO company survey

- Conduct more research to collect statistical data on the number of women at various management levels to help build the business case
- Build capacity of employers' organizations on fostering women's talent
- Provide awareness raising at executive levels of employers' organizations and members
- Training and development of member organizations and assistance on policy and measures
- Give advice to members on career planning schemes to tap into women's talent
- Engage in coaching, training, mentoring, capacity building to foster women's talent and ensure their effective participation in decision making
- Reward or recognize best practices on gender diversity (through tripartite dialogue)
- Encourage dialogue between organizations to share best practices and seek commitment of organizations.
- An internal assessment and identification of good practices of staff and members of employers' organizations on gender issues in order to promote successful business managerial women as case studies and role models
- Develop policy documents as well as practical tools for implementation

CONTACT US

For further information please see:

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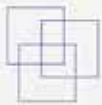


International
Labour
Organization

Women in business and management: GAINING MOMENTUM IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC



ASIA-PACIFIC REGIONAL FACT SHEET



ACT/EMP
The Bureau for Employers' Activities

Factsheet - SIDE B

FACT 1: PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN THE LABOUR MARKET WILL BE NEEDED TO SUSTAIN ECONOMIC GROWTH

- Asia Pacific as a region is developing rapidly, with multiple countries considered as emerging markets resulting in increased demand for more talent.
- Yet, labour force growth is forecasted as negative or almost no growth for China, Japan, the Republic of Korea and Thailand; moreover, ASEAN region as a whole is experiencing lower birth rates which will inevitably result in a shrinking workforce.
- Labour force participation rates for women in the Asia-Pacific region remain below that of men. Without a doubt, increasing the talent base of women will contribute to economic growth and development.
- Japan's labour force is predicted to shrink by 15 per cent between 2010 and 2030 and it has one of the lowest female labour participation rate among OECD member countries.

FACT 2: WOMEN IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION REPRESENT AN INCREASING NUMBER OF BUSINESS OWNERS



The percentage of women employers increased in 17 out of 21 Asia-Pacific countries in the past 15 years



Women represent 26 per cent of all employers in Asia-Pacific
Women represent 32 per cent of all self-employed in Asia and the Pacific

FACT 3: THE GLASS CEILING IS STILL INTACT AND WOMEN ARE UNDER-REPRESENTED IN EXECUTIVE AND BOARD LEVEL POSITIONS



China, New Zealand and Viet Nam are the only countries in the Asia-Pacific region to have more than 5 per cent publicly listed companies that have women CEOs.

Of Asia-Pacific respondents to the ILO company survey, 26 per cent had all male boards while 65 per cent had less than 30 per cent women

What is gender balance? Gender balance or gender parity is usually defined as 40 to 60 per cent of either sex

FACT 4: THE HIGHER THE MANAGEMENT LEVEL, THE LOWER THE SHARE OF WOMEN



- The pipeline is leaking - there is a decline in the number of women from lower to upper levels in the organization
- 59 per cent of respondent companies had less than 30 per cent of junior managers as women
- At middle management, 32 per cent of companies report that 10 per cent or less of their managers at this level were women
- 55 per cent of companies surveyed women represented 10 per cent or less of senior manager or no women were appointed at senior level
- In the public sector Mongolia, New Zealand and the Philippines are among the 22 countries in the world where 40 per cent or more of their legislators, senior officials and managers are women

FACT 5: GLASS WALLS WITHIN HIERARCHICAL STRUCTURES PRODUCE DIFFERENT CAREER PATHS FOR MEN AND WOMEN



Women tend to be concentrated in managerial functions such as human resources, public relations and communications, finance and administration, and sales and operations preventing them from getting the breadth of management experience necessary to move up the ladder

FACT 6: THERE IS GROWING GENDER PARITY IN TERMS OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Women outnumbered men in tertiary enrolments in 13 out of 30 countries in Asia and the Pacific for which data were available in recent years.

Overall, the percentage of women graduates tends to be higher than the percentage of men graduates in more countries in all areas except for sciences, engineering, manufacturing, construction and agriculture (non-traditional areas of study for women).



FACT 7: GLOBALLY GENDER PAY GAPS ARE STILL A REALITY

The gender pay gap measures the difference between male and female earnings as a percentage of male earnings. Educational levels, qualifications, work experience, occupational category and hours worked account for the “explained” part but the “unexplained” is attributed to discrimination – conscious or unconscious.

Country	Percentage of Pay Gap
India	33
Korea, Rep. of	32
New Zealand	31
Japan	29
Hong Kong, China	29
Maldives	29
Indonesia	22
Sri Lanka	18
Macau, China	17
Mongolia	15
Singapore	11
Viet Nam	10
Thailand	4
Malaysia	4
Philippines	0

AT THE CURRENT RATE, IT IS ESTIMATED, GLOBALLY IT WILL TAKE 70 YEARS TO BRIDGE THE GAP.



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Fostering Female Talent in the Workforce: Women in Business and Management

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