



KDI SCHOOL
KDI School of Public Policy and Management



Australian Government
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade



The Asia Foundation

“Asian Approaches to Development Cooperation: Focus on Women and Girls’ Empowerment”

September 13-14, 2017

Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia



INTRODUCTION

Organized jointly by the Korea Development Institute (KDI) and The Asia Foundation (TAF), the “Asian Approaches to Development Cooperation” (AADC) dialogue series brings together development experts and government officials from the Asia region and beyond to share perspectives and to facilitate mutual learning between and among “emerging” and “traditional” development actors.

The dialogue series is now in its 7th year. In 2011 the series began with a focus on Asian approaches to development cooperation, a novel topic of discussion in a changing aid landscape. In 2012, the AADC dialogues combined the theme of development cooperation with pro-poor inclusive growth. In 2013, dialogues in Seoul and Hoi An highlighted climate change mitigation and adaptation. In 2014, the theme was Social Mobility in Asia, featuring a dialogue in Sri Lanka and an authors’ meeting in Seoul. In 2015, the dialogues focused on the future of South-South cooperation in the region. The first dialogue, held in Phnom Penh, featured the perspective of partner countries, while the second dialogue, in Jakarta, focused on provider perspectives. In 2016, the AADC dialogues focused on the role of non-state actors in international development cooperation. This first conference in Beijing (April) explored the role of civil society in the international development while the second meeting in Delhi (August) addressed the role of private sector.

In 2017, the AADC dialogues focus on how Asian countries are tackling the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through their cooperation programs. The first conference in Manila (May) explored planned urbanization and the New Urban Agenda (SDG 11) while the second meeting in Ulaanbaatar (September) discussed women and girls’ empowerment (SDG 5). This report covers the proceedings and outcomes of the Ulaanbaatar meeting, featuring presentations and discussions by development experts, innovators, activists and practitioners from governments, companies, academia, NGOs, and multilateral organizations across Asia.

OBJECTIVES OF DIALOGUE SERIES

- To promote mutual interest, learning, understanding, and opportunities for collaboration and cooperation between and amongst Asian countries and experts.
- To explore opportunities for shared and complementary approaches and strategies for addressing these SDGs amongst Asian countries and traditional donors.
- To produce a publication compiling papers and key findings from the dialogues.
- To present and discuss Asian South-South and development cooperation approaches to women and girls’ empowerment.
- To make specific policy contributions and recommendations on how Asian-led development and South-South cooperation can better address the challenges related to women and girls’ empowerment.

OPENING CEREMONY

Meloney C. Lindberg, former Country Representative of The Asia Foundation Mongolia and current Country Representative of The Asia Foundation Cambodia, and moderator for the opening session, welcomed all participants.

In his welcome address, **Ambassador John Langtry**, Australian Ambassador to Mongolia, recognized the importance of the AADC dialogue in the DFAT-TAF partnership, as well as importance of addressing and achieving SDG 5 (Gender Equality). He also noted the programs through which Australia has been supporting in gender equality in Mongolia.

Gerelmaa Davaasuren, from the Mongolian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, added welcome remarks to participants and commented on Mongolia's progress on women's empowerment over the last 60 years. She noted that, despite significant progress having been made, more efforts and partnerships are needed to sustain and further develop in this area. She expressed her confidence that this dialogue will contribute to women's empowerment in Mongolia.

Taejong Kim, from the KDI School of Public Policy and Management, recognized the partnerships that are vital to the AADC dialogue series. He stressed the importance of the topic of women and girls' empowerment and recognized the challenges that remain, despite constant support and progress in this area.

Gordon Hein, from The Asia Foundation, welcomed participants and expressed that the diverse group gathered for this meeting will contribute to the shared understanding of key issues, innovative approaches, and emerging trends on Asian actors who are addressing vital issues of gender equality and women's empowerment.



SUPPORTING WOMEN AND GIRLS – OVERVIEW AND APPROACHES

This first session discussed how Asian countries are approaching women and girls' programming in their development/South-South cooperation programs. This included specific programmatic approaches, overall strategies for engagement or plans and ideas on how they might be addressing SDG 5 with partners.

Moderated by **Dylan Davis**, Country Representative of The Asia Foundation Korea, the session featured:

Minah Kang Professor, Ewha Womans University
Member, The Prime Minister's Committee for International Development Cooperation

Annemarie Reerink Senior Specialist Gender Equality
Gender Equality Branch, Multilateral Policy Division
Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)

Gerelmaa Davaasuren Deputy Director
Multilateral Cooperation Department
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mongolia



In her presentation, "[Girls: From Victim, Heroine, to an Active Citizen](#)," **Minah Kang** distinguished girls' issues from women's and children's issues and noted that the concept of "girls" must be reframed and singled out. Some of the biggest issues pertaining to "girls" include early marriage and pregnancy, poverty, human trafficking, food insecurity, education, and birth registration. Girls' issues have often been addressed through the "victims approach," in which girls are viewed as vulnerable, or the "instrumental approach," in which girls are viewed as future mothers, family planners, workers, citizens, and decision makers. These approaches run the risk of marginalizing issues that do not pertain to reproductive health and poverty. They can also reinforce gender bias and limit girls to being viewed as beneficiaries, rather than stakeholders. A rights-based approach is needed, through which girls' civil rights are operationalized. A current, ongoing project is the Empowerment of Girls and Training of Integrated Health Care Specialists for Girls' Health in Laos, jointly organized by KOICA and Ewha Womans University. Another is the "School Me" Campaign, by Save the Children Korea. This project rejects the assumption that formal schooling for girls is automatically empowering, and promotes gender equality together with families, school, and the community.

Annemarie Reerink presented on "[Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: DFAT Strategy and Approach](#)." She outlined how DFAT approaches gender equality and women and girls' empowerment with three main priorities: enhancing women's voices in decision making, leadership and peacebuilding, promoting women's economic empowerment, and ending violence against women and girls. Including the voices of women is crucial, not only because it is

their right, but also because women contribute diverse perspectives. Economic empowerment and participation is imperative for overall stability. Violence against women and girls is a key barrier and human rights violation in all countries in the Asia-Pacific region, Australia being no exception. The capacity of the justice system must be strengthened and women's access to justice must be ensured. To ensure accountability, all major aid programs report on six DAC criteria, one of which is gender equality. The scores of over 400 programs are aggregated and 80% of the programs must have a satisfactory score – which means programs of all sectors must address gender equality issues while being implemented. DFAT's partnerships have been growing, particularly with the private sector, which will hopefully impact product development for women and girls and lead to companies becoming better employers for women.

In her [presentation on Mongolia's International Cooperation Fund \(ICF\)](#), **Gerelmaa Davaasuren** gave an overview of this new institution. Established in 2013, the ICF endeavors to promote democracy, human rights, and good governance by cooperating with other Asian countries, with priorities given to ten countries, including Afghanistan, Bhutan, Cambodia, and North Korea. Major areas of cooperation are democratic development, mining and mineral resources, environment, freedom of the press and media, democracy education, citizen participation, human rights and good governance. A recent focus was on strengthening the role of women parliamentarians. The ICF pursues these areas by organizing international workshops with partnering countries, receiving delegations with whom to share Mongolia's experiences. Recently, Mongolia shared its experience with the development of freedom of expression in Mongolia with a delegation from Myanmar.

Q&A/Discussion:

One topic of discussion was about the involvement of girls themselves in development projects, and to what extent girls' opinions were being reflected. **Prof. Kang** shared an example – an international writing competition held at Ewha Womans University, in which a student from the Philippines won for her idea to mobilize portable changing booths for girls in shelters following disasters. The original idea was to support the implementation of the project proposed by the winning paper, but this has not yet come to fruition due to funding limitations. Another topic of discussion was regarding the issues surrounding boys, as an integral element of girls' empowerment. **Dr. Reerink** commented that addressing boys' issues are a big part of DFAT's prevention work, since boys learn violent behavior at an early age in many societies. She emphasized that addressing gender inequalities must involve men and boys rather than it being seen as an issue for women only. There is still much work to be done in terms of figuring out how to approach this issue, since there are many complexities involved, such as deeply seated cultural norms. She also addressed the importance of mobilizing fathers, as, for example, judges who are fathers of daughters are likely to make more gender-sensitive decisions. The discussion also addressed the possibilities and opportunities for partnerships and funding sources. **Ms. Gerelmaa** shared that women Members of Parliament in Mongolia are very active in terms of pursuing partnerships and furthering South-South cooperation. Although Mongolia is not a donor country, Mongolia's transition to a democracy is an experience worth sharing. The main challenges for the ICF are budget restraints.

WOMEN AND GIRLS' HEALTH

During this session, panelists featured Asian programs on women and girls' access, engagement and advocacy on health services.

Moderated by **Taejong Kim**, Managing Director, Development Research and Learning Network, KDI School, the session featured:

Akiko Hagiwara Senior Advisor on Health
Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)

Wu Peng Director, International Department
China Foundation Poverty Alleviation (CFPA)



Akiko Hagiwara spoke on "[Empowerment of Women and Girls in Health Sector: JICA's strategic focus on Maternal and Child Health toward SDGs.](#)" She briefly introduced JICA's strategy for gender equality and women's empowerment, which focuses around the promotion of women's rights, capacity building, and the advancement of women's leadership in the public sector. Essential to the promotion of women's rights are women's health and gender mainstreaming, thus issues of maternal and child health are prioritized. The Maternal and Child Health (MCH) handbook has been an important tool in JICA's health programs. The MCH handbook contains health records and information on pregnancy, delivery, and child health, and is designed to be kept by the family. Not only does it keep a comprehensive health record, but it also educates mothers to make informed decisions and promotes continuous health care practices. This handbook, adopted into the Japanese healthcare system in 1948, has since been shared with over 20 countries in their local languages and adopted into their health systems. The MCH handbook has been utilized in Palestine since 2008 and has served as a tool to empower refugees and mobile populations. JICA and the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) have also begun working on the digitization of the MCH Handbook for Palestinian refugees. Women can gain knowledge and greater control over their health and their children's health with the MCH handbook. The MCH handbook also promotes male involvement in reproductive and family health. JICA promotes mutual learning among Asian and African countries through international conferences and third country training programs.

In his presentation, "[More Attention Needs to be Paid to Women in Poverty-Stricken Areas](#)," **Wu Peng** shared CFPA's experience implementing a maternal child and health project in Sudan. He highlighted the challenges that women encounter in poverty-stricken areas. These include low education levels, lack of health services, and lack of information. Women are often required to shoulder both agricultural and domestic responsibilities, as their spouses become immigrant workers in cities. CFPA, founded in 1989, carries out projects related to education, health, livelihood and disaster relief. CFPA's Maternal and Infant Healthcare Program in Sudan sought to address the high maternal and infant mortality rate, which stems from a shortage of health infrastructure and resources. CFPA partnered with local NGOs and conducted baseline research to design a maternal and infant care program, sharing China's model. They built a hospital and provided equipment and midwifery kits, as well as medical volunteers to train midwives. CFPA also worked to build a healthcare network around the hospital and local community. Community-based pregnancy schools were set up to allow the women to have a closer relationship with the village midwives and enable follow-up care. The Sudan Ministry of Health endorsed the replication of the program in other parts of the country.

Q&A/ Discussion

The following discussion expanded upon improving health services provided to mothers, adolescent girls, and infants, as well as how to ensure data privacy. **Mr. Wu** shared that providing transportation in rural communities has been effective in making hospitals more accessible to women. **Dr. Hagiwara** explained that difficult-to-reach women, who do not use health services due to their cultural practice or un-wanted teenage pregnancy, could be reached through a community approach as communities can identify the target women and support them to seek services. Health education in secondary schools is another method of reaching many girls. She also commented on the importance of digital devices and applications to reach vulnerable women. It was stressed that special attention should be given to training health workers for women-and girl-friendly health services. In terms of privacy, Kenya and Ghana have coding systems recognized by healthcare providers that are used for health records, such as recording HIV status. Other topics of discussion touched upon organizational strategies and priorities. **Mr. Wu** mentioned the Chinese state's support for South-South cooperation and goal of poverty eradication. To identify countries to cooperate with, CFPA looks for institutional strategy alignment, matching resources, and prioritizes countries which have suffered from natural disasters. **Dr. Hagiwara** expressed a preference for mainstreaming women's empowerment with a multi-sectoral approach for synergy, although it is not easy to visualize impact due to the absence of indicators for women's empowerment.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

In this session, presenters featured Asian programs which ensure and advocate on women and girls' safety and security.

Moderated by **Zeng Lu**, Program Officer of The Asia Foundation China, the session featured:

Kalpana Viswanath

CEO and Co-Founder, Safetipin

Ruby Kholifah

Country Representative, AMAN Indonesia
The Asian Muslim Action Network (AMAN), Indonesia



In her presentation, "[Technology and Data to Build Safer Cities](#)," **Kalpana Viswanath** shared the initiatives of Safetipin, a social enterprise that seeks to use data to make cities more inclusive, safe and free from violence for women and others. Safetipin, though originated in India, is expanding across continents. A map-based online and mobile phone application, Safetipin collects and disseminates safety-related information through various methods, including crowd sourcing. Areas in the city are audited, based on eight main parameters: lighting, openness, visibility, people, security, walk path, public transport, and gender usage. Different colored pins appear on the map, representing levels of safety. Areas are given a score out of 5, based on the audits collected, and connects to a navigation application to indicate the safest route. The app's "Stay With Me" feature also allows users to ask a friend to track their location. To ensure thorough auditing, Safetipin Nite was developed, which allows photos of the street to be automatically taken through cab drivers' phones. Areas in Delhi with insufficient lighting, or "dark spots," were identified and reported to the government – since then, the government has fixed the lights along 45 stretches and are working on 92 more. Safetipin has expanded into Bogota, Nairobi, Jakarta, and Quezon City. In Bogota, bike tracks are audited by bikers, so that women can safely ride their bikes at night.

Ruby Kholifah presented on "[Women, Peace and Security: Strengthening CSOs Dealing with Religious Groups](#)." She stressed the importance of recognizing the vulnerability of women in conflict areas across Asia and how women from Indonesia are sharing their learnings with women in other conflict zones. AMAN Indonesia's strategies to promote peace include consolidating progressive voices, providing inclusive interpretation of the Islamic texts, and strengthening women leadership at the grassroots level. The Women's School for Peace program provides a community-based school for interfaith women. AMAN Indonesia also provides interpretation of the Islamic Texts that are more inclined to gender equality, through an online platform. When religion is a way of life and are dominated by male leaders, it can be used to justify gender inequality, which is why the women in the community must be empowered. Social media platforms are used to engage with the youth as well as to information and ideas. AMAN has partnered with CSOs and governments to promote these values. Dialogues have been held in Thailand and Myanmar to address issues such as the role of Muslim women, responding to violent extremism, and women's leadership.

Q&A/Discussion:

In the discussion that followed, several questions expanded upon the use of technology and data to promote safety. **Dr. Viswanath** shared that, although there are eight main parameters that the Safetipin app uses to measure the safety of a location, in reality 50 parameters are used to generate data. The Safetipin app has been downloaded approximately 75,000 times. The use of a smartphone makes the service accessible, but Safetipin is working on ways to address the same issues offline. Dr. Viswanath also stated that the best apps have one function, thus the program is simplified as much as possible. Another topic of interest was the religious aspect of promoting gender equality. **Ms. Kholifah** stated that religion cannot be ignored, especially at the grassroots level, when religious doctrine is embedded in the culture. Fighting the religious doctrines has no effect, thus more inclusive interpretation must be sought and provided. Further investment is needed to continue studying the large body of Islamic texts in order to use religious doctrines to empower women across the region.

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND INCLUSION

This session featured Asian programs on women and girls' access to, engagement and advocacy on work, finance, and other economic resources.

Moderated by **Jane Sloane**, Director of the Women's Empowerment Program, The Asia Foundation, the session featured:

Andray Abrahamian Senior Advisor, Choson Exchange

Ana Bobadilla Secretariat, ASEAN Women Entrepreneurs' Network (AWEN)

Qiao Yanjin Director of China Textile Information Center (CTIC)
Director, Productivity Promotion Dept., China National Textile and Apparel Council

Janhavi Dave International Coordinator, HomeNet South Asia (HNSA)



In his presentation, "[North Korean Women in Business](#)," **Andray Abrahamian** introduced the work of Choson Exchange, a Singapore registered non-profit that trains North Koreans in entrepreneurship, economic policy, and urban planning. South-South cooperation is especially valuable when it comes to North Korea, as there are many barriers that keep traditional donors from attempting to cooperate with North Korea. A common misconception that people have is that North Korea has a command economy that is completely state owned – in reality, individuals run and own businesses, though there may be restrictions. Since 2010, Choson Exchange has worked with 1,681 participants in 52 programs. The Women in Business program helps bridge the gap caused by North Korean women's limited access to business education, capital and the socio-political relationships necessary to start and maintain a business. The program includes a workshop in North Korea and a visit to Singapore to observe best practices and develop a peer network. Monitoring and evaluation is extremely difficult in North Korea, as information is rarely shared outside of the government. Unsurprisingly, given the current political situation, working with North Korea has become very difficult.

Ana Bobadilla presented on how the ASEAN Women Entrepreneurs' Network (AWEN) promotes Asia-Asia women's cooperation. In her presentation, "[Economic Empowerment and Inclusion](#)," Bobadilla emphasized that women account for 43% of the ASEAN labor force, and it is predicted that equal participation will boost the GDP of the ASEAN economy by 30%. AWEN organizes regular forums for women to share information and experiences, provides capacity building for women business leaders, make policy recommendations and establish funds for feasible projects. AWEN also facilitates communications and information sharing and organizes dialogues and exchange visits. ASEAN Activate is a project in which the ten ASEAN nations identify and partner with ten startup companies to help improve their value chain and introduce new business opportunities. Recently, a Women's Business Conference was held in Manila which discussed the topic "ASEAN WOMEN: Leading Change," as well as the ASEAN Women Entrepreneurs of the Year Awards. Although there is still much to be done, much progress is being made. By consolidating efforts through partnership and collaborations, women's economic empowerment can be achieved.

In her presentation, "[Women Empowerment and Productivity Promotion: the Case of the Chinese Textile and Apparel Industry](#)," **Qiao Yanjin** spoke about how CTIC's initiatives to empower women in the industry in China are expanding to other countries. The CTIC is a public service institution by the state-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission. By 2016, over 60% of workers in the Chinese textile and apparel industry were women. CTIC began sexual harassment and prevention training in 2007, held a Women Leadership for Industry Development forum in 2009, and have been promoting women's empowerment and better legislation for women in the workplace. The ongoing Women's Empowerment and Leadership Project provides direct and indirect trainings in multiple subject matters, including women's health, cross-gender communications, sexual harassment prevention, and various soft skills. The Project also works with company management to promote corporate commitment to gender equal practices and female and family friendly policies. Survey results for the project have shown an overall increase in employee satisfaction of company benefits, cross-gender communications, reproductive and health knowledge, and work-life balance. CTIC also partners with international organizations to promote women's empowerment in Chinese invested companies in five target countries – Pakistan, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Myanmar and Cambodia.

In her presentation, "[Economic Empowerment for Women Home-Based Workers in the South Asian Region](#)," **Janhavi Dave** outlined the issues surrounding home-based workers and the work of HomeNet South Asia (HNSA). There are approximately 50 million home-based workers in South Asia, comprised mainly of women, who face low wages, irregular work, and lack of access to markets and social security. HNSA, a charitable organization which was originally initiated by UN Women and the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), is a regional network of 59 home-based workers' organizations from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The SABAH project was implemented to build strong supply chains and generate employment for women home-based workers at each stage of the supply chain by building sustainable social enterprises. SABAH became a collective brand used for marketing products made by social enterprises of home-based workers in Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Q&A/Discussion

Questions focused on individual organizations' work and impact, as well as issues surrounding capital and access to finance. **Dr. Abrahamian** stated that North Korea wasn't being portrayed in a holistic manner, and that its society is much more interesting and complex than it is perceived to be. Choson Exchange saw this to be an opportunity to support positive changes in North Korea that were already taking place. There is a growing middle and upper class in North Korea whose interests the state must take into consideration. The more women's voices are included in that class, the more their interests will be represented. Choson Exchange provides opportunities that North Korean women are typically excluded from, such as international access and connections with different institutions. Ideally, Choson Exchange would like to help introduce capital into women's businesses. **Ms. Bobadilla** noted that access to loans is an issue of interest to AWEN, which represents 300 million business women. Not only is there a lack of financial resources, there is a lack of awareness among women as well. Forums which have highlighted these issues have helped government employees to realize the importance of loan access. The Development Bank of the Philippines is one institution that provides such loans. Similarly, **Ms. Dave** stated that the available loans may be enough to start a small business, but not more beyond that. What is needed is a combination of a grant and debt or equity. Some effects of the increased empowerment of home-based workers include women investing more in their children's education, including private schools, and in some cases an increase in domestic violence. **Ms. Qiao** noted that CTIC's trainings in cross-gender communications, stress management, and sexual health and harassment were not only beneficial in the workplace, but also empower women in their homes. According to surveys among workers and managers, productivity and profitability are also expected to improve as a result of these interventions.

REGIONAL AND GLOBAL INITIATIVES

In this moderated discussion, panelists discussed how Asian countries are leading or contributing to regional and/or global initiatives supporting women and girls.

Moderated by **Anthea Mulakala**, Director of International Development Cooperation, The Asia Foundation, the session featured:

- Gerda Binder** Senior Regional Adviser, Gender and Development
UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office
- A.H. Monjurul Kabir** Senior Programme Advisor and Chief of Section
Asia-Pacific and LDCs
UN Women HQ, New York
- Jane Sloane** Director, Women's Empowerment Program
The Asia Foundation
- Liang Xiaohui** Deputy Chief Economist
China Textile Information Center
- Supriya Roychoudhury** Senior Associate
Centre for Latin American, African and Caribbean Studies
O.P. Jindal Global University



Q1. How can massive infrastructure and connectivity programs like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) or Asia-Africa growth corridor (AAGC) have a positive impact on women and girls' empowerment? What should some considerations be to make these highly impactful programs more sustainable from a gender perspective?

Liang Xiaohui said that, in line with its ambitious nature, the BRI is expected to have significant positive benefits for local women, as textiles, infrastructure and agriculture are very relevant to the initiative and the countries involved. Infrastructure development will benefit local women and increased international exchange will expose local individuals to other cultures.

Jane Sloane stressed that, while infrastructure projects are essential to expanding economic and employment opportunities for women, it is important to include women in the designing of such projects. The potential dangers must be recognized, such as environmental risks, forced migration, and increased trafficking. However, if women are involved early, they can benefit from opportunities that infrastructure development can offer.

Supriya Roychoudhury stated that India's partnership with Japan has ensured that there are social elements which have been built into the vision of the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor initiative. Although the vision document recognizes the importance of women as partners in this initiative, it fails to provide any detail on how the initiative will operationalize this. The AAGC should expand its vision to focus on gender-friendly infrastructure, as well as include women in the design and implementation processes.

Monjurul Kabir commented that these large-scale regional initiatives did not quite meet expectations in terms of integrating gender. The economic synergy that is being created is one to be celebrated, but it is important that robust elements promoting gender equality and empowerment of women and girls are considered – not merely as a social endeavor, but at the heart of the investment.

Gerda Binder shared a case in which UNICEF supported China's aid for child health in Africa. Considerations of gender issues were not an afterthought, but very much a part of the design of the social development project.

Q2. Two large financial institutions that are supporting these initiatives are the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the New Development Bank (NDB). Tell us about the sustainability framework of the NDB and about efforts to include a gender perspective.

Supriya Roychoudhury shared Jindal University's collaboration with human rights experts, academics and organizations in BRICS countries to develop a sustainability index. The NDB's sustainability framework currently does not recognize gender as one of the key pillars, creating a worrying gap. Jindal University's efforts focus on moving away from women being viewed as passive recipients, but rather as active agents of change. Additionally, they want to move away from focusing solely on physical infrastructure, to taking a transformative approach to social infrastructure. NDB should adopt a gender framework in its internal and external operations.

Q3. In recent years, the UN has accelerated its South-South cooperation (SSC) programming – when it comes to programs on women and girls, to what extent have efforts been more proactive or responsive?

Gerda Binder said that UNICEF tries to meaningfully mainstream gender into all the sector programs. It also has an individual platform for adolescent girls' empowerment. The four

priority areas are: ending child marriage, adolescent health, girls' education and supporting survivors of gender-based violence. An example of how SSC works within that framework is UNICEF and UNFPA's joint program in ending child marriage. There are 12 focus countries, with which conferences and learning exchanges are programmed.

Monjurul Kabir stated that gender is not a big criterion of focus in traditional SSC and TrC (Triangular Cooperation) initiatives. UN Women does not position itself as a SSC facilitator, but tries to influence SSC initiators to be more conscious of gender issues. UN-Women firmly believes that the entire 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development must deliver for women and girls, beyond the achievement of the SDG 5. To this effect, the entity aims to leverage South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) in its normative work, operational activities, and, advocacy and coordination efforts. It acts as a global broker of knowledge and experiences through different means including fostering of the SSTC, and the sharing of lessons learned and good practices on normative progress towards achieving gender equality. UN Women still does not have dedicated staff or Unit to SSC, but sees itself as an institutional facilitator of cooperation among member states and other partners including Civil Society and private sector. The SDGs are expensive to implement – non-traditional areas of finance must be tapped into, and it is important to mainstream emerging Southern donors into this process. China has been contributing largely to SSC efforts, India, South Africa, Brazil and other countries have been actively engaged in SSC endeavours.

Q4. SSC has many pillars, and a key pillar is related to investment. Are there regional or multilateral efforts in the private sector that are addressing women and girls' empowerment? What are companies doing and where are their opportunities for shared value partnerships between the Asian private sector and NGOs?

Jane Sloane shared an example of NGO, government and private sector collaboration in women's entrepreneurship – the Women's Business Center and Incubator in Mongolia, funded by the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) and implemented by The Asia Foundation jointly with Ulaanbaatar City and other partners. There is also an Asia Foundation developed concept note called "Accelerate Growth" which ambitiously aims to support over a million women entrepreneurs over the next five years. The Paris-based Fondation Chanel has been working to adapt this program within a South Korean context. There have also been conversations with Gap, who is planning on taking their Personal Advancement & Career Enhancement (P.A.C.E.) program beyond their own factories, as they see that the program has become a key retention tool for factory employees.

Liang Xiaohui noted that gender is mentioned a couple of times in the vision document of the BRI. The overall vision of the BRI puts more focus on the "green" element and needs more human-oriented policies. He also shared that, in Buddhist prayer rooms in factories, male employees were observed as getting closer access to Buddha than their female counterparts. Although there must be cultural respect and sensitivity, this practice was gently discouraged through clear factory rules, as gender equality must also be promoted at the workplace.

Q5. There is an ongoing discussion and debate on whether Asian SSC and development cooperation approaches are distinct in approach and philosophy from Western and

traditional donor approaches. With respect to women and girls' empowerment do you see a convergence or divergence in approaches?

Supriya Roychoudhury pointed out that Asia is a very heterogenous region and it is often challenging to comment on a unified Asian approach to development cooperation. For example, India considers itself to be a Southern donor, while Japan is officially an OECD DAC donor. Nevertheless, Japan still bears striking similarities with other Southern donors. These differences and nuances should be accounted for in any analysis of Asian SSC. Although there has been a growing trend among Asian donors, such as India, to focus on a “people-centred” and socially oriented approach to development cooperation, as opposed to a purely economic one, gender still continues to be largely marginalised by their development cooperation frameworks. In attempting to define a more people-centred approach to development cooperation, policymakers must ensure that they account for the gender implications of their development cooperation strategies. We must hold policy makers accountable to this.

Q&A/Discussion

In the following discussion, questions arose regarding the balancing efficiency and risk mitigation, as well as deliberate human development in infrastructure. **Ms. Binder** used Mongolia as an example of setting deliberate changes in national policies, as Mongolia has menstruation hygiene management as a standard in schools and dormitories. **Dr. Kabir** shared that risk management for UN supported initiatives is completely different than that of the private sector. The process is very rigorous for UN-implemented projects, but the same process might be difficult to adapt to private sector sponsored projects unless the combined risk management and robust Monitoring and Evaluation system is designed early on. **Ms. Sloane** commented that a crucial strategy to the aforementioned “Accelerate Growth” initiative is identifying anchor organizations in each country to support networks, peer exchanges and connecting donors to anchor organizations. Current conversations with Uber revealed that they are interested in skill-building for their drivers and would like to focus intentionally on women drivers. Of the 100,000 Uber drivers in India, only 13 are women, because women do not feel safe. **Ms. Mulakala** made a final comment about the existence of a gap in access to local organizations. It is important for enablers to identify opportunities for civil society to engage.

CLOSING REMARKS

Moderated by **Kyung-sook Lee**, Director of Programs, The Asia Foundation, Korea, the session featured:

Anthea Mulakala Director, International Development Cooperation
The Asia Foundation

Taejong Kim Managing Director, Development Research and Learning Network
KDI School of Public Policy and Management

Gordon Hein Senior Vice President of Programs, The Asia Foundation



In her concluding remarks, **Anthea Mulakala** summarized key takeaways from the discussions. She observed that the discussions highlighted the significance of South-South cooperation, which is that initiatives are based on a country's own experience, which it then shares with another country. The meeting also featured examples of cooperation outside of the government, where private sector and civil society organizations can complement the action taken by governments to promote gender equality and address gaps. Issues of improving accessibility and maximizing networks and technology were repeatedly discussed. It is also important to identify how enablers can further facilitate cooperation. **Taejong Kim** commented on areas of improvement that were discussed, including improvement of data collection and security in public spaces. He noted that there seems to be room for opportunities and improvement regarding startup businesses. He expressed that the knowledge he acquired from these sessions will affect the work that he does in Korea. **Gordon Hein** noted the wide range of topics that were covered over the two days of discussion, from health, safety and security, infrastructure, economic empowerment, to gender and climate change. He commended all participants for the quality, energy and passion of the dialogue and thanked all those involved.

WELCOME DINNER & KEYNOTE ADDRESS



The keynote speaker at the Welcome Dinner was Oyun Sanjaasuren, Chair of the Global Water Partnership, Founder of the Zorig Foundation, and former Member of Parliament, former

Minister of Environment and Green Development, and Former Minister of Foreign Affairs. Dr. Oyun presented on issues of gender and climate change. Climate change is likely to impact women and men disproportionately, and it is important not to overlook women’s knowledge and input in finding solutions.

FIELD VISIT

Participants visited the Women’s Business Center and Incubator, which aims to increase the number of women-owned businesses by creating an enabling environment for women entrepreneurs to receive high-quality business support and services. Core activities include providing business information, regular trainings and consultations, providing facilities, networking events, and the accelerated incubator program. As of June 2017, 3,279 women entrepreneurs have attended trainings, 1,002 female entrepreneurs registered as WBC clients, and 1,423 consulting and advisory sessions had been delivered. The visit concluded with a visit to the Center’s pop-up shop, in which participants were free to browse and purchase merchandise from WBC clients and Incubator participants.



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Participants' biographies can be found [here](#).

The program agenda can be found [here](#).