



September 2018

Dear Lotus Circle Advisors, Members, and Friends,

It was wonderful to have Lotus Circle members in the Bay Area join me at the Sausalito Women's Club to hear about my journey to women's human rights work and to learn more about The Asia Foundation's programs to advance women's rights and gender equality that are supported by Lotus Funds. It was also special to be speaking in a building created by Julia Morgan, the first woman architect licensed in California and whose work is noted for its elegance and quality.

Our Women's Empowerment Program team has been traveling too, with Paula, Program Officer, having just returned from Mongolia where we're leading work funded by the Asian Development Bank to promote women's access to green jobs, and Elizabeth, Senior Program Officer, currently in Paris at a convening organized and funded by the Chanel Foundation for its grantee partners. Elizabeth is presenting on our Chanel-funded program in Korea to support women entrepreneurs there. For myself, I'm looking forward to spending time in New York this week to update our Lotus Circle Advisors on our projects and to continue planning for our Lotus

Leadership Awards Gala that will take place in New York on April 3rd.

Lastly, I'm thrilled to report that our offices in Sri Lanka and Afghanistan have secured funds from the Canadian Government to support five-year projects that will strengthen women's political participation and voice.

Warm regards,
Jane

HIGHLIGHTS

The Asia Foundation convenes "Gender Inclusive Approaches to Climate Action" panel



The Global Climate Action Summit on September 12th-14th and its hundreds of affiliate events brought government, private sector, and civil society leaders and changemakers from across the world to San Francisco. To highlight important interventions and innovations taking place in Asia and the Pacific, Jane Sloane, Director of the Women's Empowerment Program, convened a panel on "Gender Inclusive Approaches to Climate Action."

This was a terrific opportunity to showcase The Asia Foundation's work to support women's leadership on climate at the grassroots. Aditya Pillai, Program Officer for the Foundation in India, and Dr. Bilqis Hoque, President of the Environment and Population Research Center, one of the Foundation's partners in Bangladesh, spoke about the important work made possible with Lotus funding to build a women's movement in support of women's leadership in response to climate impact and disasters. In addition, Paula



Unjacke, Women's Empowerment Program Officer, spoke about the work we are leading on women's climate resilience in Mongolia, Laos, and Fiji, and Kim DeRidder, Director of Environment Programs, shared some key lessons learned on the importance of prioritizing women's needs and leadership when designing programs around climate and environment.

Jane, Bilqis, Aditya, Paula, and Kim also attended the Global Climate Action Summit - including a special event on Women's Empowerment and Climate Justice hosted by former President of Ireland Mary Robinson - to represent The Asia Foundation's work on gender, climate, and environment.

***InAsia* blog examines key takeaways from State-of-the-Art Gender Equality Workshop**



Eileen Pennington, Senior Advisor, and Elizabeth Romanoff Silva, Senior Program Officer for the Women's Empowerment Program, have published a blog highlighting five key takeaways from the Foundation's State-of-the-Art Gender Equality Workshop held in Sri Lanka in August. These include: (1) Donors are deepening their commitment to gender equality, both in their funding priorities and by putting their own houses in order, and they expect those they fund to do

the same; (2) Strong organizations invest in their staff as the key change agents for their work; and (3) To be a leader in gender equality, an organization needs to scrutinize its own practices. Discussions also revealed important steps The Asia Foundation is taking to meet these expectations and challenges, such as endorsing the [Minimum Standards for Mainstreaming Gender Equality](#), seeking support for and strengthening our [Gender Smart Initiative](#), and developing innovative strategies within our country offices such as Gender Committees which promote cross-learning across programs and staff.

Read more about key takeaways from the State-of-the-Art Gender Equality Workshop [here](#).

Study on women-owned businesses in Vietnam finds need for support accessing financial resources, information and knowledge, and market and business development



The Asia Foundation has completed a 9-month study on the obstacles faced by women-owned small and medium-sized enterprises in Vietnam and their need for support in terms of access to financial resources, information and knowledge, and market and business network development. The empirical results provide evidence for developing policies and support services that address the

needs of women entrepreneurs and their businesses. Some of the recommendations include the development of alternative financial products, assisting women-owned enterprises to join value chains, and providing knowledge support services focused on finding business partners and customers, output markets, and legal consulting services.

"As A Woman My Country is the Whole World": Jane Sloane shares her journey to becoming an activist and advocate for women's rights and gender equality



On September 27th, Jane Sloane spoke at a special event organized by the Sausalito Woman's Club. In the historic Julia Morgan-designed clubhouse, Jane spoke about her journey to her global work in support of women human rights defenders and creating a global citizen movement. She also shared what has sustained and inspired her work as an activist and advocate for women's rights and gender equality - from spending a day with Nelson

Mandela in 2000, which set her on the path to citizen-led change and conflict resolution-focused work, to becoming a part of the Sausalito community while also frequently being on the ground in parts of the world that have experienced trauma and disaster first-hand.

Spotlight: Meet Lotus Circle Advisor Sydnie Kohara



Lotus Circle Advisor Sydnie Kohara has more than 30 years' experience helping people tell their stories around the world. As an Emmy Award-winning broadcast journalist, she has interviewed business legends, international luminaries, and political leaders, from Richard Branson of Virgin Airlines and Jack Ma of Alibaba, to former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein,

and Akie Abe, wife of Japan's prime minister.

As founder of Kohara Group LLC, Sydnie has produced media projects for Fortune 500 companies like Oracle and Charles Schwab & Co. and provided media training for diverse clients, including a healthcare thinktank at MIT, the City of Palo Alto, and several startups. A versatile professional, Sydnie also organized media coverage for the Eighth Secretary-General of the United Nations Ban Ki-moon's surprise visit to Northern California last year to celebrate the 100th birthday of the woman he calls his "American mom."

Sydnie's storytelling reflects a diverse career and a knack for discovering heart pumping adventure. Sydnie has climbed to the top of the Golden Gate Bridge, been chased by a Siberian tiger cub, and sat in a New Orleans policeman's boat as he searched for Hurricane Katrina victims. And she's not afraid of trying something new, like becoming the first woman co-host for the University of Alabama's football shows and hosting Corporate Raiders, a business game show seen by nearly 50 million viewers in Asia. Sydnie was also part of an all-woman team that placed 4th in the 2018 California Trout's Five Rivers Challenge, the state's premier fly-fishing competition.

Based in the Bay Area, Sydnie has emceed two major events for The Asia Foundation in San Francisco: the inaugural Lotus Leadership Awards Dinner and the Leaders on the Frontlines: Asia's Changemakers of Today and Tomorrow event honoring Ban Ki-moon and our Development Fellows.

SUPPORT OUR WORK

Missed the August edition of Lotus Letter? [View it here.](#)

The Lotus Letter photo (top of email) depicts The Asia Foundation's mental health and psychosocial training sessions held with Counselling Assistants in Sri Lanka. Image courtesy of Gemunu Amarasinghe.

