



June 2019

Dear Lotus Circle Advisors, Members, and Friends,

Since the last Lotus Letter, we have seen the impact of the devastating Easter Sunday terrorist attacks on churches and hotels in Sri Lanka, claiming the lives of many. The attacks targeted the districts of Colombo, Gampaha (Western province) and Batticaloa (Eastern province), bringing to a halt a decade of peace following the long-running civil war. Given The Asia Foundation's experience and involvement working with persons affected by conflict, war and trauma, we are providing Lotus Funds to support the psycho social needs of first responders and building the capacity of counsellors in recognizing the needs of girls and women after a major trauma.

With many requests for Lotus funding from the Foundation's 18 country offices to respond to immediate needs such as these, as well as funds to sustain and leverage important work, we were heartened to have such a successful Lotus Leadership Awards dinner in San Francisco last week to raise flexible funds for WEP programming and to recognize honorees' contributions to gender equality. "*We women – we are individually strong, but collectively we are powerful,*" said Golden State Warriors' CFO and Lotus Circle Leadership honoree Jennifer Cabalquinto at the dinner. Her words echoed throughout the night as The Asia Foundation's 250+ guests honored Cabalquinto, long-time Foundation partner in Vietnam the Center for Education Development, and actress, education advocate and Asia Foundation scholarship benefactor Lana Condor for their important contributions towards supporting Asia's next

generation of women in business, education and the arts. See more details on recent Lotus events below.

For the past two weeks I've been in the Pacific where I spoke at a Learning Forum on Women's Economic Empowerment. I showed the video we produced on the Mongolian Women's Business Center, which is supported with Lotus Funds, and now a group of donors and women leaders here are keen to explore the potential of creating something similar in Fiji!

I have been working on a women's climate resilience project funded by the Asian Development Bank and listening to the heartbreaking stories of Pacific women from smaller islands like Kiribati and Tuvalu of what climate change and rising sea levels has meant for their livelihoods, cultures and very existence. Supporting women's access training, resources and jobs that will enable them to adapt and be resilient to the changes coming in their countries and communities will be vital in the time ahead. This month we'll be conducting workshops on women's climate resilience in Mongolia, Laos and Fiji, working closely with the governments of these countries together with NGOs, the private sector, research organizations and women grassroots leaders.

Warm regards,
Jane

HIGHLIGHTS

Lotus Leadership Awards and Young Lotus Soiree raise support for women's empowerment and gender equality programming



It has been a very busy spring for the Lotus Circle and The Asia Foundation!

On May 29 in San Francisco, Golden State Warriors Chief Financial Officer Jennifer Cabalquinto, actress and education advocate Lana Condor, and the Center for Education and Development (CED) (an Asia Foundation partner in Vietnam) each received a 2019 Lotus Leadership Award. Broadcast journalist and Lotus Circle Advisor [Sydnie Kohara](#) served as master of ceremonies. Condor and Cabalquinto have used their respective platforms in the entertainment industry and with one of the greatest sports franchises in the world to actively promote opportunities for women and girls. CED has significantly expanded opportunities for women pursuing degrees in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics over the past decade.

Condor was adopted from Can Tho province in Vietnam as a child. This experience fueled her passion to provide educational opportunities to girls born in poverty in Asia. She currently supports an Asia Foundation scholarship program in Can Tho, transforming lives of young women and girls and opening doors to education and possibility. Cabalquinto thrives in a male-dominated field. Born in the Philippines, she moved to the U.S. as a young girl, and today is one of the highest-ranking Filipinas in the corporate world. A key executive behind the powerhouse NBA franchise, she runs its finance and accounting operations including the development of the \$1 billion Chase Center, the first privately-financed modern sports arena.

Vietnamese scholar Ha Thi Anh, who is studying engineering through CED and an Asia Foundation scholarship, enthralled the crowd, proclaiming: "*Life does not get better by chance; it gets better by change.*" Watch a new [film](#) on the Lotus Circle and see [photos](#) of the event.

Earlier this spring, on April 3 in New York City, the Lotus Circle honored *CNN* and *PBS* journalist Christiane Amanpour, and the pioneering India-based social enterprise and long-time Asia Foundation partner SafetiPin, for their contributions to women's and girls' empowerment in Asia. Acclaimed author and women's empowerment advocate Gayle Tzemach Lemmon from the Council on Foreign Relations moderated the evening, and honorary co-chairs and Lotus Advisors Hee-Jung Moon and Janet Montag hosted the gala. [Watch a film on SafetiPin](#) and see [photos](#) of the event.

And on May 2nd, the 7th annual Young Lotus Soiree was hosted by Lin and Stephen Jamison at Eli Klein Gallery in New York. Jane Sloane, Asia Foundation Director of Women's Empowerment, spoke



about how Lotus funds are used as ignition funds to respond to emerging needs and opportunities, pilot innovative ideas, and leverage work for bigger funding opportunities, and Lin and the host committee were wonderful ambassadors for the Foundation's work to advance women's empowerment and gender equality.

Proceeds from these events are used as Lotus funds, the flexible funds that the Women's Empowerment team invests in pilot programs and activities that respond to both urgent needs and strategic long-term opportunities. Time and again we see how the infusion of Lotus funds acts as a catalyst driving the success of innovative and impactful programs that advance women's empowerment. Thank you to all the Advisors for your incredible support.

Nepal's first Women in Data Conference promotes women's leadership in data sciences



The Foundation recently organized Nepal's first Women in Data Conference as part of a Data for Development program. With the theme "Where Two Superpowers Meet: Women and Data," this conference hosted 300 women from civil society, academia, and the private sector to share experiences of working in data sciences; to discuss data and technology, women leaders in data, and gender statistics; and to build data

skills on subjects such as social research methodology, using data for social good, visualizing gender statistics, and data analysis software. All data labs were led by women.

You can see a short video spotlighting the country's data needs and the experience of five women working in data in Nepal [here](#).

Panel explores nexus of gender-based violence and climate change in Asia-Pacific

The Foundation's Women's Empowerment Program team organized a panel on *Gender-Based Violence and the Rise in Climate-Related Disasters: Applying CSO Insights to Multilateral Investments in Asia and the Pacific* at the Asian Development Bank's (ADB) 52nd Annual Meeting in Fiji.



Nandita Baruah, the Foundation's Country Representative in India, moderated the panel of experts on the gendered impacts of climate-related disasters, practical insights from recent programming to address sexual and gender-based violence in disaster-affected contexts, and opportunities to further address the nexus of violence and climate change.

Sharing best practices to support women's entrepreneurship in China



Lv Pu, Program and Communications Coordinator for the Foundation in China, spoke on a recent panel organized by partner China Global Philanthropy Institute. The panel focused on the challenges women face in entrepreneurship and career development, and included a discussion on gender-based discrimination in job

recruitment and the potential impacts of a recent rule prohibiting such discriminatory practices. Lv Pu also shared different strategies to support women's entrepreneurship, including the Foundation's Lotus-supported Women's Business Center in Mongolia.

Spotlight: Meet Lotus Circle Advisor Swati Bhise



Swati Bhise has had a career over the last 30 years in the creative arts spanning Indian classical arts, media talk shows, arts in education, women's empowerment, choreography and film production. Swati is the CEO of Cayenne Pepper Productions and Executive Producer/Associate India Producer for the 2016 film *The Man Who Knew Infinity*. She has choreographed Broadway shows such as *The Transposed Heads* and *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. She has had a lifelong stellar career as a Bharatanatyam dancer spanning many decades including landmark performances such as the 40th anniversary of the U.N. General Assembly. She has also trained a generation of American children in

Indian classical arts. She was the U.S. correspondent for *Sruti Magazine* and also the anchor of the TV program *Spotlight on Culture*. Swati runs the *Sadir Theatre Festival* which has been running for eight consecutive years in Goa, India. She has been a dedicated Lotus Circle Advisor for The Asia Foundation and a long-serving performing artist for the

Lincoln Center Institute and Symphony Space.

"The Warrior Queen of Jhansi" inspires discussions of women's empowerment at NYC screening and panel



On May 6th, The Asia Foundation hosted an exclusive film screening with Lotus Circle Advisor Swati Bhise's Cayenne Pepper Productions to provide a first look at her major motion picture, *The Warrior Queen of Jhansi*. Asia Foundation Women's Empowerment Director Jane Sloane joined Swati on stage at the screening to discuss women's empowerment with Devika Bhise, who stars

in the film as Lakshmibai, the historic Queen of Jhansi who fiercely led her army against the British East India Company in 1857, and Jodhi May, as Queen Victoria.

Says Swati: *"I wanted to make this film to tell an inspirational story to a global audience. It's an incredible story about a woman who fought for what she believed in. Her story is one of female empowerment, more relevant now than ever, and can be drawn upon to inspire women all around the world."* The screening attracted 250 influencers, including film critics, academics, and policy practitioners. Notable attendees included Madhur Jaffrey, Dana Ivey, Phylicia Rashad, Director Griffin Dunne, Julie Taymor and Celia Weston.

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

View all previous Lotus Letters [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.
