

**Reporters May Contact:**

Fiona Hill, Bank of America, 1.980.387.8687  
[fiona.a.hill@bankofamerica.com](mailto:fiona.a.hill@bankofamerica.com)

Kathy O'Hearn, Vital Voices, 917.885.4489  
[kathyohearn@vitalvoices.org](mailto:kathyohearn@vitalvoices.org)

**Vital Voices and Bank of America Host Mentoring Program to Empower Women Leaders From Across the Asia Pacific Region**

SYDNEY – On Monday, October 3, Vital Voices Global Partnership and Bank of America will launch a week-long mentorship initiative in Sydney to advance women leaders from business, social enterprise and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the Asia Pacific region. This effort, which is part of the ongoing [Global Ambassadors Program](#) (#GlobalAmbassadors), a Vital Voices and Bank of America partnership, will include one-on-one mentoring sessions and strategic workshops focused on building organizational management, financial acumen and leadership skills.

In the context of the one year anniversary of the United Nations' [Sustainable Development Goals](#), a series of ambitious targets to end extreme poverty and tackle climate change by 2030, the week will center on the theme "Empowering Women Leaders to Advance Sustainable Development," underscoring the critical role that women can play in moving their nations forward.

The Asia Pacific region as a whole, especially South Asia, has significant room for improvement on basic issues such as protecting women from violence or upholding their rights to property, as well as on indicators in key areas including nutrition, health, education, employment and political participation<sup>1</sup>. The program recognizes that women leaders in the region can help transform their countries and build thriving economies: closing the gender gap in the Asia Pacific labor market could increase GDP by 30 percent per capita<sup>2</sup>.

In Sydney, senior women executives will work with women leaders from seven countries across the APAC region, including Australia, Fiji, Myanmar, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines and Vietnam, to discuss strategies to develop their small businesses and organizations while navigating challenges they face in leadership roles in growing economies, including gender discrimination, cultural norms and expectations, and formal access to credit markets. They will gain access to a network of expertise, including coaching on financial management and strategic planning, to help them develop skills and further connections that will help them achieve goals such as environmental conservation and sustainable development.

"Women play an increasingly significant role in driving global economic development," said Anne Finucane, vice chair, Bank of America. "In the spirit of the Sustainable

Development Goals, this partnership builds a support system for women in emerging countries to create sustainable business growth, contributing to a growing global economy.”

The meeting in Sydney is a continuation of an ongoing commitment to the Asia Pacific region by both partners, with previous Global Ambassadors Program initiatives held in India, Singapore, and most recently in Japan in 2015. Bank of America has had an on-the-ground presence in the region for over 60 years and has supported more than 60 charities in the region through philanthropic giving and volunteer support, working to create opportunity and build a better economic future. For its part, Vital Voices has supported women leaders here for more than 17 years, conducting innovative trainings, policy dialogues and leadership summits from South Asia to Oceania.

“We are proud of the impact we’ve had in this region to date and the women working to make real change,” said Alyse Nelson, president and CEO of Vital Voices. “We’re confident this program will be an instrumental part of our efforts to support women as drivers of economic growth, in the Asia Pacific region and beyond.”

Ten Global Ambassadors (mentors) will be paired with mentees.

The mentors are:

- Lauren Anderson, founder and CEO, LC Anderson International
- Joanna Doolan, director, EY
- Stacey Kelly Egide, founder and CEO, Andalou Naturals
- Amanda Ellis, special advisor for International Programs and Partnerships, Office of the President, East-West Center
- Kim Kingsley, co-founder and former chief operating officer, POLITICO
- Janet Lamkin, California state president, Bank of America
- Margaret Lyng, senior vice president, regional head of human resources, Asia Pacific, Bank of America Merrill Lynch
- Raegan Moya-Jones, co-founder and CEO, aden + anais
- Adi Tafuna’i, co-founder and executive director, Women in Business Development, Inc.
- Kitty Yung, former executive officer and president of Asia, American Eagle Outfitters

The mentees are:

- Khin Chaw Su Win, managing director, Max Square Enterprises Co., Ltd.
- Kia Dowell, CEO, Codeswitch
- Nguyen Thi Le Hoa, deputy director, Oxfam Vietnam
- Linh Phuong Nguyen, executive director, Research Center for Management and Sustainable Development
- Maria Ronna Luna Pastorizo-Sekiguchi, managing and creative director, The Greenhouse Studio
- Gladeys Jill A. Santos-Cua, founder and CEO, Jill Santos-Cua & Company, CPAs

- Nguyen Thu Hue, founder and CEO, Center for Marinelife Conservation and Community Development (MCD)
- Moale 'Mo' Vagikapi, founder and co-director, IM Associates (IMA) Limited
- Nguyen Van Anh, director and chairman of the Foundation Committee, Center for Studies and Applied Sciences in Gender, Family, Women and Adolescents (CSAGA)
- Brianne West, founder and formulator extraordinaire, Ethique

The Global Ambassadors Program is part of Bank of America's and Vital Voices' ongoing commitment to investing in women's leadership development, a goal guided by the belief that strong leaders are important to healthy, vibrant communities including advancing economic growth. Over time, mentors help their mentees develop critical communications, advocacy and business skills and strategies to advance their work. Since the Global Ambassadors Program launched in 2012, mentoring programs have been held in Poland, Northern Ireland, Mexico, Qatar, Singapore, Brazil, India, South Africa, Haiti, Japan, London and now Sydney, reaching over 100 women from 51 countries.

For more information on the Global Ambassadors Program, visit [www.bankofamerica.com/globalambassadors](http://www.bankofamerica.com/globalambassadors). Follow [@BofA\\_News](https://twitter.com/BofA_News) and [@VitalVoices](https://twitter.com/VitalVoices) for updates via #GlobalAmbassadors.

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Development Programme, [Power, Voice and Rights: A Turning Point for Gender Equality in Asia and the Pacific](#)

<sup>2</sup> Asia Development Bank, Women in the Workforce: [An Unmet Potential in Asia and the Pacific](#)

#### Vital Voices Global Partnership

Vital Voices Global Partnership invests in women leaders who improve the world. Founded by then First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, and guided by the belief that women are essential to progress in their communities, it has partnered with leaders from more than 140 countries who advance economic opportunity, increase political and public leadership, and end violence against women. Programs in strategic planning, business, advocacy and communications build critical skills needed for creating transformational change at scale. Through its global platform, women leaders expand their connections and visibility, accelerating shared progress for all. Visit [www.vitalvoices.org](http://www.vitalvoices.org) to learn more.

#### Bank of America

At Bank of America, our focus on Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) factors is critical to fulfilling our purpose of helping make people's financial lives better. Our commitment to growing our business responsibly is embedded in every aspect of our company. It is demonstrated in the inclusive and supportive workplace we create for our employees, the responsible products and services we offer our customers, and the

impact we make around the world in helping local economies thrive. An important part of this work is forming strong partnerships with nonprofits and advocate groups, such as community and environmental organizations, in order to bring together our collective networks and expertise to achieve greater impact. Learn more at [www.bankofamerica.com/about](http://www.bankofamerica.com/about), and connect with us on Twitter at [@BofA\\_News](https://twitter.com/BofA_News).

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