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**Bank of America and Vital Voices Advance Economic Empowerment of Women in Post-Conflict and Ongoing Peacebuilding States**  
*Global Ambassadors Program Focuses on the Power of Mentoring*

BELFAST – Bank of America and Vital Voices today launched a weeklong mentoring initiative in Belfast, Northern Ireland, bringing together influential women executives from the public and private sectors to mentor women leaders engaged in small and medium-sized business and social enterprise who are at a tipping point in their professional and personal leadership paths. The initiative is the eighth installation of the [Global Ambassadors Program](#) (GAP) and is distinctive in its effort to pair senior leaders with women from post-conflict and ongoing peacebuilding regions, rather than one geographic area. The program (May 12 to 16) includes one-on-one mentoring sessions, strategic planning workshops to build business acumen, and participation in the International Business Women’s Conference (IBWC).

The international community has become increasingly aware of the valuable contribution of women to conflict prevention and sustainable peacebuilding, as well as the crucial role that they can play as business leaders in the recovering economy of regions classified as post-conflict and ongoing peacebuilding. Despite this acknowledgement, [research from UN Women](#) reveals that in four recently examined post-conflict countries, only 4 percent of budget was allocated to women’s empowerment or gender equality<sup>1</sup>. In response, a number of global organizations have begun to recognize and elevate the critical importance of the economic empowerment of women when rebuilding these societies.

“The Global Ambassadors Program in Belfast will bring together a diverse group of women leaders who can benefit from mentoring to advance their business goals and contribute to economic stability in their regions,” said Candace Browning, head of global research at Bank of America Merrill Lynch and a Global Ambassador.

While in Belfast, senior female executives will meet with women leaders from Croatia, Indonesia, Lebanon, Libya, Northern Ireland, Palestine, Rwanda and Somalia to discuss strategies and tactics to help meet their goals. The mentoring forum will also be held in context of the 16th anniversary of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, which ended a violent 30-year conflict in Northern Ireland, recognizing how countries can successfully return to stability and rebuild their economies.

The mentors and mentees will also participate in the [International Business Women's Conference](#) (May 12 to 15), an event that will bring together more than 750 delegates from countries including the U.K., Ireland, and the U.S. to discuss the importance of women business leaders in a recovering global economy, and the ways that men and women can work together to harness their full potential and create growth and opportunity for all. In addition, the women will participate in a Networking Walk with IBWC participants, during which they will discuss professional challenges and strategies for success, further accelerating their leadership development through mentoring.

"We're proud to welcome the participants of the Global Ambassadors Program to the first International Business Women's Conference in Northern Ireland, IBWC 2014, and recognize that the aims of this initiative very much mirror those of our conference," said Roseann Kelly, chief executive of Women in Business NI, host of the International Business Women's Conference. "Centered around 'creating a new economy' and unleashing the full potential of individuals to drive business growth, the importance of mentorship in empowering leaders in business will form a central part of IBWC 2014."

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

The mentors are:

- Ibukun Awosika, founder and CEO, Chair Centre Group.
- Sharon K.G. Dunbar, major general, U.S. Air Force, commander, Air Force District of Washington.
- Eleanor 'Tabi' Haller-Jorden, president and CEO, The Paradigm Forum GmbH.
- Samar Haj Hasan, founder and manager, Mahara Professional Consultancies in Development.
- Kathleen Holland, founding partner, KMH Associates.
- Katy Knox, senior vice president, Bank of America.
- Geraldine McAteer, CEO, West Belfast Partnership Board.
- Susan Thrasher, senior vice president, Bank of America.

The mentees are:

- Najah Jaroush Abdouni, owner/director, Tassamim (Lebanon).
- Omnia Eteyari, co-founder/CEO, Mazadah for Training and Development (Libya).
- Carol Fitzsimons, CEO, Young Enterprise Northern Ireland (N. Ireland).
- Gaella Alexandra Gottwald, director, Croatian Association of Artists (Croatia).
- Dr. Deqo Aden Mohamed, CEO, Dr. Hawa Abdi Foundation (Somalia).
- Nisreen Musleh, managing director, Ritaj for Managerial Solutions (Palestine).
- Rosette Chantal Rugamba, managing director, Songa Africa the Tourism Company (Rwanda).
- Nurlan Silitonga, director, Angsamerah Institution (Indonesia).

"Our goal with the eighth Global Ambassadors Program is to build an international community of social and business leaders who recognize the enormous potential for peace to positively impact the economic empowerment of women in post-conflict and ongoing peacebuilding regions around the world," said Alyse Nelson, president and CEO

of Vital Voices. “It will also recognize and underscore a call-to-action made 16 years ago at another Vital Voices conference held in Belfast, during which then-First Lady Hillary Clinton highlighted women’s engagement as a means of affecting global peace and prosperity.”

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 vital to healthy, vibrant communities and help advance economic growth. Over time, mentors help their mentees build critical communications, advocacy and business skills and develop strategies to advance their work. Previous mentoring forums have been held in Mexico, Qatar, Singapore, Brazil, India, South Africa, and Haiti. Future locations will be announced this year.

For more information on the Global Ambassadors Program, visit [www.bankofamerica.com/globalambassadors](http://www.bankofamerica.com/globalambassadors).

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#### Vital Voices

Vital Voices Global Partnership is a leading non-governmental organization that identifies, invests in and brings visibility to extraordinary women around the world by unleashing their leadership potential to transform lives and accelerate peace and prosperity in their communities. Founded by former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in 1997, the organization trains and mentors women leaders as agents of transformative change in economic development, human rights and political

participation. The Vital Voices Global Leadership Network includes more than 14,000 leaders representing 144 countries who have trained and mentored 500,000 additional women and girls in their communities. Visit [www.vitalvoices.org](http://www.vitalvoices.org) to learn more.

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