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Vital Voices and Bank of America Host Program in Warsaw to Promote Women's Economic Empowerment in Central and Eastern European Countries
Global Ambassadors Program Focuses on the Power of Mentoring

WARSAW – Vital Voices and Bank of America today launched a weeklong mentoring initiative in Warsaw, Poland, to convene influential women executives from business, media and civil society to mentor women leaders involved in business or social enterprise who are at a tipping point in terms of their professional and leadership development.

The initiative is the ninth gathering of the [Global Ambassadors Program](#) (GAP) and pairs senior leaders with women entrepreneurs from Central and Eastern European countries to discuss strategies to grow and develop their businesses and nonprofit organizations while navigating challenges experienced in regions with emerging economies and developing democracies. The program, running September 8-12, includes one-on-one mentoring sessions, strategic planning and additional capacity building workshops to build business acumen.

A reception at the United States Embassy of Poland with the Vital Voices Poland Chapter will foster new connections between program participants and leaders in government, business and civil society.

"Our goal is to address the needs of women leading business and social enterprise in the region," said Alvin Allgood, COO of Vital Voices. "We're honored to work with women taking their visions to scale and we're pleased to connect them to members of the Vital Voices Poland chapter — a network of businesswomen and professionals advancing economic opportunity for more than seven years."

In Central and Eastern European countries, the transition from the planned economy to the liberalized market economy has enabled the formal recognition of entrepreneurship and the development of women entrepreneurs. While women in the region have been able to found and develop their own businesses, they continue to face substantial

professional challenges. In Poland, for example, women are estimated to make the equivalent of 52 cents for every dollar men make, representing one of the lowest ratios in the world. In addition to these barriers to success, women must navigate the challenges of unrest and even active conflict in their respective countries. The economic empowerment of women is especially critical in times of transition, helping to preserve and rebuild countries facing social, economic and political instability.

In Warsaw, senior women executives will meet with women leaders from four Central and Eastern European countries, including Poland, Russia, Ukraine and Belarus, to discuss opportunities for leadership focused on economic, societal and political challenges facing their countries and communities. The women will also attend a reception at the United States Embassy in Poland to network with women from the Vital Voices Poland Chapter, a partnership formed in 2007 between the Vital Voices Global Partnership and the Polish Professional Women's Network (PWNet). The Chapter hosts mentoring and leadership programs for women leaders from business, academia and non-governmental organization sectors across Poland and into Eastern European countries, including Georgia, Moldova, Belarus and Ukraine. The program will also include a site visit to a mentee's business, allowing the Ambassadors and mentees to see first-hand how a fellow woman entrepreneur is making an impact on her community.

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

The mentors are:

- **Lidia Adamska**, business consultant, Lidia Adamska Business Consulting
- **Sheri Bronstein**, human resources executive, Global Banking and Markets, Bank of America
- **Anna Colton**, Retail Banking region executive, Metro New York/Mid-Atlantic, Bank of America
- **Galina Melnikova**, owner and managing partner, HR Partners, Ltd. and the Open Door Club International; partner, Institute OD and Change Management
- **Beata Mońska**, owner, Business Consulting BMBC
- **Eileen O'Connor**, former CNN correspondent and lawyer
- **Beata Pawłowska**, managing director, Oriflame Poland
- **Lorna R. Sabbia**, head of Managed Solutions, Global Wealth & Investment Management, Bank of America

The mentees are:

- **Agnieszka Bilińska**, CEO and founder, Vital Voices Poland (Poland)
- **Victoria Butsich**, director, ITMINE (Belarus)
- **Katerina Cronstedt**, founder and CEO, Katerina.ru (Russia)
- **Olena Galushko**, partner and international development director, Association of Private Investors (Ukraine)
- **Joanna Janczycka**, advisor to the president, ARMA (Poland)
- **Elena Lyakh**, head, Togliatti City Agency of Economic Development (Russia)
- **Tatiana Semikop**, head of the Public Movement "Faith, Hope, Love" (Ukraine)
- **Natalia Skobnikova**, CEO, DSF Logistic (Belarus)

“The Global Ambassadors Program fosters mentoring relationships around the world to promote the success of women entrepreneurs who are working toward a more prosperous and stable future for their home countries, and further build a growing community of international leaders dedicated to women’s economic empowerment,” said Rena DeSisto, Global Arts & Culture and International Corporate Social Responsibility executive “We understand the importance of providing new networks and access to women leaders, which are key factors in contributing to the success of local economies worldwide.”

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. Previous mentoring programs have been held in Northern Ireland, 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.

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 to learn more.

Bank of America

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