



**Asia-Pacific  
Economic Cooperation**

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## **50 Leading Companies for Women in APEC**

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**Asia-Pacific  
Economic Cooperation**

# **50 Leading Companies for Women in APEC**

Policy Partnership on Women and the Economy (PPWE),  
SOM Steering Committee on Economic and Technical Cooperation (SCE)

November 2014





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# Executive Summary

## Background

Building upon the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)'s Growth Strategy of 2010 and other APEC activities, this project seeks to provide support for increased career and economic opportunities for women in the APEC region and beyond. The project objectives are 1) to raise awareness of women's economic contributions to business activities today, and 2) contribute towards greater opportunities for women to take on more leadership roles and to be further included into economic activities. To achieve these objectives, the project has selected approximately 50 exemplary companies and organizations from APEC economies to share their efforts in increasing opportunities for women with stakeholders in APEC economies and beyond.

In conducting this project, Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI, the project overseer), collaborated with the APEC Policy Partnership on Women and the Economy (PPWE) and public agencies from participating APEC economies. Two private research firms, Washington CORE and Mizuho Information & Research Institute (MHIR), have solicited responses from the participating companies and composed this report.

The project was conducted between June and October of the year 2014 in four phases: 1) defining and sharing objectives, 2) selecting and nominating companies, 3) distributing and collecting questionnaires, and 4) compiling and composing best practices.

With support from public agencies from each participating economy, exemplary companies were nominated to participate in this project. In some economies, industry organizations such as the chambers of commerce also provided assistance in nominating companies for participation. Company selections were conducted in a manner that sought to ensure as balanced a representation from each economy as possible. The research firms distributed a survey form to the nominated companies by email from late July to early September, 2014. The contents of the completed survey forms were later summarized into the company profiles listed in this report.

A total of 48 companies contributed to this publication. These companies were drawn from a diverse set of regions, economies, industries, and sizes. As seen in Figure 1, they were nominated by 14 economies from the Americas, Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia and Oceania.<sup>1</sup> Southeast Asia had the highest number of participating companies.

A third of the participating companies were in the manufacturing industry, while companies engaged in trade or the service sector were also common. Furthermore, the companies were divided almost evenly by their size: small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) accounted for 52% of participating companies, and another 44% were large companies.

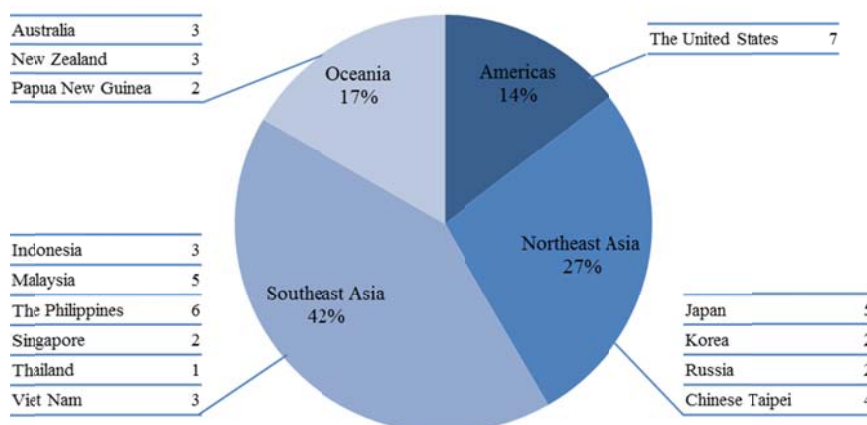


Figure 1. Number of Company Nominations by Economy

## Key Findings

This project revealed a number of significant outcomes from different companies' actions to encourage women's participation and leadership. Despite the wide variety in company sizes, structures, sectors, and leadership, many common factors have emerged among the participants in this project. Below are seven key factors found in this project for successful practices that companies have undertaken to contribute towards

<sup>1</sup> Among seven companies nominated by the United States, a company based in Hong Kong, China (Citi Hong Kong) was nominated although its parent company is headquartered in the United States.

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greater opportunities for women to take on more leadership roles and to be included further into economic activities.

1) *Strong commitment by leadership is a key component for successful policies to support women's participation and leadership.* Many of the companies that participated in this project emphasized the strong commitment to diversity shown by their leadership. Often, the company was founded by a woman who overcame many barriers as she led a company to success, and that founder's commitment to women's participation and leadership is etched into the DNA of the company. In other cases, senior leadership have realized, for various reasons, that their firm's demographics don't match its growth potential, and have taken actions to steer their policies to be more conducive to women's success.

2) *Policies that provide equal opportunities based on merit and respect employees' lives naturally attract and retain women.* Some of the companies that participated in this project do not have any women-specific policies: instead, they have become companies where women contribute at all levels through implementing policies which increase opportunities for all qualified staff members through merit-based recruitment and promotion. In addition, firms which work to support their employees' work-life balance through policies respecting employees' lives, such as flexible work schedules and maternity/paternity leave, have found that these policies have led to improved individual performance by employees, improved sales, and high retention rates, as well as high morale among employees.

3) *Recruitment of women is an important tool for building the foundation for women's participation.* Some companies chose to employ various methods to ensure that female recruitment and promotion meet standards for women's participation at all levels of the company. Examples of such methods include implementing a quota system, setting specific goal numbers or percentage of women hired and promoted, making sure certain numbers of women are included among every group of candidates, and recruiting women or external experts into hiring teams. These policies help to ensure that a company develops into a more diverse employee base and supports the future development of women leaders from within the company.

4) *Personal relationships and communication among peers are valuable tools to build a culture of diversity.* In order to build a lasting foundation for the positive initiatives that they have created, many firms have strongly encouraged communication among their employees. Among the SMEs that participated in this project, these tools have included regular 'socials' or events, volunteer activities, and other networking opportunities. Larger companies have developed internal councils to support initiatives for women, intranet-style websites for employees to discuss issues, and mentoring relationships between women at the company. These actions have helped companies to develop and share awareness among staff, improve the office environment through respecting employees' input on important issues, and in some cases have also facilitated innovation and boosted sales.

5) *Evaluation is an important component of successful diversity programs.* Many large firms engage in regular evaluation of policies through tools such as surveys of employees and studies of programs. In several cases, companies first undertook their gender support policies after receiving feedback from employees or internal studies about the need to build diversity at the firm. A rigorous process of evaluation has helped many of the companies that participated in this project to maintain and build upon their initial policies to encourage women at their firm.

6) *Companies with successful gender equality programs often pursue external policies and partnerships.* Many of the most imaginative companies in this report have formed a relationship with external associations for women. In some cases, these associations advise on program creation or collaborate in providing seminars and skills trainings. In other cases, the partnership represents a link with a local NGO or multinational development organization focused on supporting women in local communities. These initiatives show how companies that are developing their gender equality policies can benefit from both internal actions, as well as working alongside external partners who can provide useful views or can act as a forum for sharing best practices.

7) *Supporting women's economic opportunities frequently intersects with support for traditional communities and crafts.* Several of the companies participating in this project, particularly those from economies in Southeast Asia, are working to improve economic opportunities for women through efforts to develop the economic potential of rural areas, or through building markets and opportunities for traditional communities and crafts. Many of these companies also give back to the local community through supporting local micro-finance opportunities for women, providing skills training on financial topics, or through volunteer work. In this way, the company's employees and the women that they support are helping to improve the livelihoods of their local communities and provide greater opportunities for the next generation.

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# Foreword

In 2010, APEC leaders recognized women’s empowerment as one of the crucial aspects of inclusive growth as a part of the APEC Growth Strategy. In 2011, the declaration made at the High Level Policy Dialogue on Women and the Economy held in San Francisco set “women’s leadership” as one of the priority areas for future APEC action.

Concerned by the “leaking pipeline” phenomena, in which there are increasingly fewer numbers of women employed at each higher level within companies (such as manager, executive manager, chief executive, etc.), APEC’s Policy Partnership on Women and the Economy (PPWE) has approved this project. The goal of the project is to encourage women’s involvement in leadership roles by publicizing the kinds of efforts that are undertaken by private companies with greater participation of women than other organizations.

The project seeks to contribute to the greater inclusion of women in economic activities in the APEC region by disseminating exemplary cases of companies increasing opportunities for women. The most crucial step in reaching this goal is to share this report on best practices with as many companies as possible so that they can learn from these cases. In order to do so, the report has been aided by various collaborating organizations, including the Human Resources Development Working Group (HRDWG) and the APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC), in addition to PPWE. We hope that the best practices will be widely propagated through these entities and channels. We have focused on applicable real-life cases from actual organizations in the hope that these cases will be seen as models by those who are searching for ways to increase opportunities for women.

Lastly, we would like to thank everyone who assisted with the project. As we designed the project, we received a variety of constructive advice from the public officials of each of the co-sponsoring economies: Australia; Indonesia; New Zealand; the Philippines; Russia; Thailand; and the United States. Their advice has contributed significantly to the design of the framework of the project. Numerous individuals from 14 participating economies, including all of the co-sponsors, have contributed in nominating companies for inclusion in this publication. We are also grateful that the economies that are not included in this report took the time to sincerely consider participating in this project. Moreover, the project received invaluable support from Mr. Yoshinori Komamura of ABAC Japan and his staff. We would also like to thank the ABAC members and affiliated individuals from all participating economies who helped us in selecting companies for inclusion in the publication. This project was further made possible thanks to the contributions from companies that shared their efforts and related data. Finally, the APEC Secretariat has contributed valuable and practical advice as we navigated through the procedures in publishing this report.

In closing, we ask all involved parties, once again, for their kind support in disseminating this report on best practices.

APEC Office  
Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI)



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The participating economies are listed in alphabetical order as specified by the APEC publication guidelines. The word “economy” refers to a member of APEC and is used to specify who nominated a given company rather than the geographic location of the company, which may differ in some cases.