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## **China achieving gender parity and ranks top among 6 Asian markets**

*Community Business' latest benchmark of gender diversity across multinational companies in Asia shows the most significant improvement in the representation of women at senior levels in China yet leaking pipeline is an on-going challenge*

**HONG KONG, 28 October 2014** – China is performing strong with the average representation of women reaching or exceeding gender parity in the total workforce and at junior and middle levels, and with the highest representation of women at senior levels among 6 Asian markets, according to the '**Gender Diversity Benchmark for Asia 2014**' (**GDBA 2014**). The lead sponsor of the report is **Bank of America Merrill Lynch**, as part of its efforts to promote diversity and inclusion.

Download the launch event photos:

[http://www.communitybusiness.org/events/2014/GDBA2014/GDBA2014\\_Launch2.htm](http://www.communitybusiness.org/events/2014/GDBA2014/GDBA2014_Launch2.htm)

The study benchmarks Asia's gender diversity in over 30 multinational companies across six markets, including China, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Malaysia and Singapore, and was conducted by Community Business, a leading not-for-profit organisation specialising in corporate responsibility and a thought leader on diversity and inclusion in Asia.

As revealed in the report, the overall representation of women in the workplace is very strong in China. The country ranks first at **junior** (64.9%) and **senior levels** (35.6%), and second only to Malaysia in the **total workforce** (56.7%) and at **middle levels** (49.6%). There is a general upward trend in performance in China with the most significant improvement at senior levels – up at 35.6% from 13.0% in 2009 and 20.7% in 2011 when the study previously conducted. While the average representation of women at senior levels is the highest in the region, the **biggest leak in the pipeline** remains between middle to senior level positions, indicating women locally continue to face barriers in reaching the top positions.

In addition to providing essential benchmarking data to drive continued progress, the study for the first time included specific questions related to policies and programmes that multinational companies have in place to support the advancement of women. Findings show that across the region, including China, companies have taken commendable steps to create an enabling environment for female employees. The practice of flexible work arrangements is very well established in China with 93.1% of companies offering this to their employees. The most popular flexible work arrangements are flexible working hours (100%), home-working (70.4%) and part-time work (66.7%). However, the provision of other types of empowering initiatives, such as offering support for working parents, on-ramping support, women's networks and professional development, is slightly below the regional averages.

The senior male executives interviewed and featured in the study generally acknowledged that, based on the findings of this GDBA 2014, the average representation of women in senior positions remains low in Asia. However, for the most part, they were optimistic about the future, pointing to the growing recognition of the link between increased gender diversity and enhanced business performance. They highlighted the importance of driving cultural change in organisations from the top, and shared the key role that they are playing – leading by example and proactively engaging both men and women on this issue.

Commenting on the findings, **Fern Ngai, CEO of Community Business** said, "Overall, we are pleased to see some signs of real progress in this latest study. Of course, much more needs to be done and performance varies across the region. Women continue to be under-represented at senior levels in organisations and we need to continue to address this. However, overall these gradually improving numbers show that moving the needle and achieving greater gender balance, if not gender parity at all levels, is indeed an achievable goal in Asia.

"In particular, we commend China on its strong performance and efforts in promoting equality of women in the workplace. While China's economic growth creates greater opportunities for women to contribute to this growth, women also have pressure to work because of the rising cost of living. In

addition, the one-child policy means that daughters, as the only child, have access to the best education and are expected to pursue a career. To make the most of this talent pool of educated women, we call for the commitment of companies in China to building a sustainable pipeline from entry level to the very top,” continued Mrs Ngai.

“A diverse workforce is fundamental to the success of our business, providing a broader range of experience and perspective from the best talent available” says **Bernhard Steiner, Bank of America Merrill Lynch Asia Pacific Chief Risk Officer, who chairs the company’s regional diversity and inclusion council**. “This report shows encouraging progress in China and Asia as a region. Ensuring that progress is mirrored in senior leadership roles is not just a women’s issue, but I believe should be a leadership priority. Bank of America Merrill Lynch is proud of the progress made to date within our organisation and this report further reinforces our sustained commitment to promote gender diversity across the region.”

### **Regional Highlights:**

- **Encouraging signs of progress:** Comparing performance with the 2009 and 2011 studies, there is a general upward trend in all markets with the most noticeable improvements taking place in China and Malaysia.
- **Strong representation at junior and middle levels:** In all markets except India, the average representation of women at junior levels exceeds 50%, whilst in China, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Singapore, it exceeds 40% at middle levels.
- **Gender parity – an achievable goal:** A significant number of companies are now achieving gender parity at certain levels in their organisations – showing that this is an increasingly achievable goal. Over half of companies in China (65.5%) and Malaysia (52.9%) have achieved or exceeded gender parity at middle levels, whilst over a third (35.3%) of companies in Malaysia have done the same at senior levels.
- **Widening gap in performance:** However, the progression is more pronounced in certain markets than others, widening the gap between the best and worst performing countries in the region. China and Malaysia show the most marked improvement – particularly in terms of the representation of women at senior levels at 35.6% and 34.0% respectively, whilst Japan (11.0%) and India (10.6%) show nominal change and are barely achieving double digit figures at this level.
- **Regional averages remain low:** Despite signs of improvement in certain markets, the overall representation of women at middle and senior levels remains low across the six markets. The regional average at middle levels is 39.0% and this falls to just 24.3% at senior levels.
- **Leaking pipeline an on-going challenge in all markets in Asia:** Companies continue to experience a significant loss of women from one level to the next. The average rate of decrease across the region is 30.7% from junior to middle levels and 37.8% from middle to senior levels. The leaking pipeline is a particular issue in India from junior to middle levels (-45.9%) and in Japan from middle to senior levels (-61.3%).
- **Demonstrated commitment to creating enabling environments:** Companies have taken commendable steps to create an enabling environment for their female employees. In particular, maternity leave, paternity leave and flexible work arrangements are offered by virtually all companies in all markets, whilst women’s networks, on-ramping support and professional development programmes are also widely embraced by companies.
- **Existence of policies and programmes does not necessarily correlate to strong performance:** More companies in Japan and India offer support to working parents and professional development programmes for women than in the other markets – and yet the average representation of women at middle and senior levels in these markets is the lowest. Similarly, companies in Malaysia offer the shortest maternity leave and the least support to women in the form of women’s networks, on-ramping support and professional development - yet Malaysia performs well on all data points.

The research is also funded by secondary sponsors Brown-Forman and Google.

“We were pleased to have had an opportunity to be a Secondary Sponsor of this Gender Diversity Benchmark for Asia 2014 by Community Business. Women are key to the growth and sustainability for our business as well as the countries in which our business operates. That means many of our

mental models related to women in the workplace must not only change but it is essential that men play a role in that process,” said **Ralph de Chabert, Chief Diversity Officer at Brown-Forman.**

“This report reminds us that, while the past few years have resulted in positive change for the representation of women at all levels, there’s still plenty of room for improvement. Equipped with this data, we can better understand the extent of the challenges for gender diversity in Asia, track progress over time, and be a bigger part of the solution,” said **Keerthana Mohan, Head of Diversity & Inclusion at Google.**

The table below shows the average representation of women (%) at different levels – on a regional basis as well as the best and worst performing geographies:

	Total Workforce % & ranking	Junior Levels % & ranking	Middle Levels % & ranking	Senior Levels % & ranking
<b>REGIONAL AVERAGE</b>	47.5%	56.3%	39.0%	24.3%
<b>China</b>	56.7 (2)	<b>64.9 (1)</b>	49.6 (2)	<b>35.6 (1)</b>
<b>Hong Kong</b>	50.9 (3)	57.5 (5)	45.7 (3)	29.4 (3)
<b>India</b>	26.6 (6)	30.3 (6)	16.4 (6)	10.6 (6)
<b>Japan</b>	42.6 (5)	59.2 (3)	28.4 (5)	11.0 (5)
<b>Malaysia</b>	<b>58.1 (1)</b>	63.0 (2)	<b>50.3 (1)</b>	34.0 (2)
<b>Singapore</b>	48.2 (4)	58.5 (4)	40.6 (4)	23.7 (4)

Dedicated to progressing discussion on gender issues and boarder topics of diversity & inclusion (D&I) in the workplace, Community Business will hold its bi-annual regional Diversity & Inclusion in Asia Conference on 11 & 12 November 2014 in Hong Kong. This Conference, since its debut in 2005, has become the primary forum for discussion on D&I issues as they relate to Asia – with an established reputation for bringing together the most inspirational and informed speakers on the subject and pushing the boundaries of discussion. For the first time, Community Business offers a programme of sessions and activities on Day 1 of the Conference around the gender topics. This Day 1 programme is designed specifically for those looking to leverage the competitive advantage that female talent brings to leadership and organisational success in Asia. For more information, <http://programme.communitybusiness.org/diasiaconf2014/>.

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#### **About the Gender Diversity Benchmark for Asia 2014**

Adopting the same methodology as previous studies conducted in 2009 and 2011, this third edition of Gender Diversity Benchmark for Asia (2014) presents data showing the representation of women at different levels in 32 companies across 6 markets in Asia: China, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Malaysia and Singapore as of 31 December 2013. In addition to providing essential benchmarking data, the research provides an overview of policies and programmes that companies have in place to support the advancement of women and features interviews with twelve senior male executives deemed to be champions of gender diversity in their organisations.

The 32 companies participating in this benchmark study together employ over 240,000 employees across the six markets and include: AIG, ANZ, Ashurst, Bank of America Merrill Lynch, BlackRock, Brown-Forman, Commonwealth Bank, Cisco, Citi, Coca-Cola, Deutsche Bank, ERM, EY, Goldman Sachs, Herbert Smith Freehills, Hogan Lovells, J.P.Morgan, Linklaters, Macquarie Bank, Morgan Stanley, National Australia Bank, Nomura, Novartis, Ogilvy, PwC, QBE, Qualcomm, The Royal Bank of Scotland, Shell, State Street, Thomson Reuters and TNT.

The full report is available for download on Community Business’ website at [www.communitybusiness.org](http://www.communitybusiness.org).

#### **About Community Business**

Community Business is a not-for-profit organisation whose mission is to lead, inspire and support businesses to improve their positive impact on people and communities. As a thought leader in



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社商贤汇是一家非营利机构，它的使命是领导、启发和支持商界实践企业社会责任，发挥企业对人群和社区的正面影响。

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corporate responsibility in Asia, Community Business conducts research, facilitates events and networks, leads campaigns and provides consultancy and training. Its major areas of focus include: corporate responsibility strategy, diversity & inclusion, work-life balance and community investment. Founded in 2003 and based in Hong Kong, Community Business works with leading organisations across the Asia region. For more information, visit [www.communitybusiness.org](http://www.communitybusiness.org).

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