



Message from the Chairperson

Dear All,

Greetings from India.

The year ahead promises to be an interesting and exciting one for all of us. We have come a long way. Many of us have been able to be strongly connected and keep a constant dialogue going. Today we have active Vice Chairs in Australia, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Philippines and Mongolia. There is much that we can achieve together.

As chair CWEC, I look forward to an interactive and participative relation with women from across our member countries. It is always my pleasure to get an opportunity to meet with my fellow women from different countries. My firm belief is as privileged members of society, we need to use our varied resources toward eradicating poverty in all cultures & societies. For this we need to provide women equal opportunities in every sphere of life. Good health is the corner stone for the economic growth of all women. Therefore we could look at understanding the sanitation facilities in our still developing countries to ensure good health for our girls and women. This will enable them to become more active, participating economically strong women. Our ultimate goal: attempt to end extreme poverty in our lifetime.

Gender Equality was one of the 17 SDG goals agreed upon in the resolutions at the Sustainable Development Summit by the United Nations.

As UNDP Administrator Helen Clark noted: "This agreement marks an important milestone in putting our world on an inclusive and sustainable course. If we all work together, we have a chance of meeting citizens' aspirations for peace, prosperity, and well-being, and to preserve our planet."

If we are able to achieve that goal, it will be one of humankind's greatest achievements and I have no doubt that women will lead the way. Achieving gender equality and the economic empowerment of women is both a moral and social imperative — and it's also good business. Keeping and understanding the value and growing relevance of women participation CWEC was formalised by CACCI in 2006.

We therefore have a collective and cooperative role to play in this entire space. Let us work and plan together.

We will be having a wonderful opportunity to meet and discuss how to take this forward during our various CACCI Conferences. Let us meet, connect, join hands at these valuable platforms provided to us by CACCI and come up with a road map to ensure a better and more wholesome future for the generations to come after us.

I look forward to meeting many of you, to sit with you to plan and take forward these SDGs over the next few years to accomplish what our universe deserves and demands of us.

Let us continue to embrace each other and work for a more equitable and sustainable place for all women.

With warm regards
Mukta Nandini Jain
Chairperson, CACCI Women Entrepreneurs Council





CONFEDERATION OF ASIA-PACIFIC CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY



THE 2nd ASIA-PACIFIC WOMEN ENTREPRENEUR AWARD

The Asia-Pacific Women Entrepreneur Award is a project of the CACCI Women Entrepreneur Council (CWEC) under the Confederation of Asia-Pacific Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

The Award aims to recognize excellent women entrepreneurs in the Asia-Pacific rim who not only are successful in their business but also advocate corporate social responsibility for the good of their country. Conferred every two years by CACCI in conjunction with the CACCI Conference, the Award is open to women entrepreneurs nominated by any CACCI Primary Member.

SELECTION CRITERIA

- Must be engaged in her country-based or international-based profit organization that has been in existence for at least five years and actively involved in the global market
- Must be actively involved in a business-related non-profit organization or in a CACCI Primary Member country's activities
- Must exercise excellence in entrepreneurial and business leadership
- Must be regarded in her country with integrity and known for practicing good business ethics

The winner of the Award shall also be selected on the basis of her outstanding achievements in the following areas:

1. Business Acumen (40%)

Consideration is given to the ability of the candidate to take advantage of business opportunities, solve problems, set corporate directions and effectively implement plans (which include major strategies and tactical moves) to achieve corporate targets and objectives. This also considers the overall impact on the performance of the company in terms of profitability.

2. Involvement in Non-profit Business Organizations or Associations and/or Involvement in CACCI activities (25%)

Consideration is given to concrete achievements in corporate social responsibility as a result of the candidate's involvement in business and civic organizations. Consideration is given to the

candidate's expertise shared through mentorship especially of other women entrepreneurs, programs initiated and implemented, and direct involvement in activities – including those of CACCI and other business organizations - that benefit specific sectors and the country in general.

3. Leadership Qualities (20%)

Consideration is given to the ability of the candidate to steer her company and/or civic organization to a position of strength and stability. Quantitative and qualitative standards such as company performance for the last three years, corporate image/reputations, and awards and recognition earned by the company/organization under the candidate's leadership shall apply.

4. Integrity (15%)

Consideration is given to the candidate's background and character and how she is perceived by her peers and the community in her country; she must exhibit a commitment to honesty, fairness, objectivity and responsibility; and her company must be run ethically that express shared global concerns, values and standards.

NOMINATION RULES

1. The Asia-Pacific Women Entrepreneur Award is open to all Primary Members' affiliated local chambers of commerce and industry (town and city chambers).

2. Nominees qualified to participate are those nominated and endorsed by a Primary Member. Each Primary Member may submit at most **five** nominees from among the local entries, and submit the same to the CACCI Secretariat.

3. The timeframe of achievement shall cover the period from **January to December** of the year prior to the presentation of the Award.

4. The Primary Member must complete and sign the Official Nomination Form. The entries must be documented with an Executive Summary of not more than 800 words about the achievement of the woman entrepreneur nominee. It shall briefly state what she has achieved based on the given set of criteria.

5. The entries must be supported with the required documents specified in the Official Nomination Form.

SELECTION PROCESS

1. An Awards Committee shall be constituted by the CACCI Secretariat to evaluate the nominations. A **short-list of the five** most outstanding women entrepreneurs shall be made by the Awards Committee. The short list shall, in turn, be passed on to the Board of Judges, which is composed of representatives of the Primary Members who are willing to serve in the Board. The short-list must be received by the Board of Judges at least a month prior to the date of the final selection process.

2. The nominee must:

a. Agree to abide by the rules and regulations of the CACCI Awards Committee;

b. Be willing to give additional information required by the Committee; and

c. Be willing to personally appear before the Board of Judges to make a presentation or for interview, if required; and receive the Award, if selected.

JUDGING RULES AND MECHANICS

1. Nominations together with the Executive Summary and support documents as stated in the Official Nomination Form must be received by the CACCI Secretariat by June 30, 2018, and delivered to the Awards Committee by August 15, 2018.

2. Five (5) members (with no two representing the same CACCI member country) shall compose the Board of Judges. All five (5) judges or their duly authorized representative must be present during the Final Judging Session in November 2018.

3. The short-listed nominees shall be evaluated by the Board of Judges using a weighted grading system. The Board's evaluation shall be made based on the supporting documents submitted by the nominees and, if necessary, through interviews of the nominees.

4. The winner shall be decided on the basis of the weighted grade. The nominee who receives the highest weighted grade based on the agreed criteria shall be declared the winner.

5. The Board of Judges' decision shall be final.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULES FOR THE 2nd ASIA-PACIFIC WOMEN ENTREPRENEUR AWARD

Oct. 27, 2017

First circular announcing the launching of the 2nd Asia-Pacific Women Entrepreneur Award and seeking nominations to be sent to Primary Members

Nov. 30, 2017

Second circular on the Award Program to be sent to Primary Members

Jan. 31, 2018

Third circular on the Award Program to be sent to Primary Members

Mar. 31, 2018

Fourth circular on the Award Program to be sent to Primary Members

May 31, 2018

Deadline of Submission of Nominations by Local

Chambers to their Primary or National Chambers

June 30, 2018

Deadline for Submission by Primary Members of their (at most) five best nominees to the CACCI Secretariat

Jul. 15, 2018

Constitution of the Awards Committee

Aug 15, 2018

Secretariat submits nominees from Primary Members to the Awards Committee for evaluation and grading.

Sept 15, 2018

Selection of five short-listed nominees based on evaluation by the Awards Committee.

Sept. 22, 2018

Constitution of the Board of Judges

Oct. 15, 2018

Deadline for submission to the Board of Judges of the short-list together with supporting documents

Nov. 2018

Board of Judges meets in Istanbul to Select Winner

Nov. 2018

Presentation of Award to the Winner
(Gala Dinner of 32nd CACCI Conference)

THE AWARD

1. The Asia-Pacific Women Entrepreneur Award shall be given to the most outstanding women entrepreneur of the region who shall receive a plaque or trophy plus US\$2,000 cash.

2. In addition, each of the short-listed nominees shall be provided traveling allowance of not more than US\$500 to enable her to undergo the final selection process to be held a day before the CACCI Conference.



The Board of Judges of the 1st Asia-Pacific Women Entrepreneur Award listens to a nominee's presentation during the 30th CACCI Conference held in Taipei in 2016

CACCI Launches 2nd Asia-Pacific Women Entrepreneur Award



Finalists of the 1st Asia-Pacific Woman Entrepreneur Award receive Certificate of Achievement from CACCI President Mr. Jemal Inaishvili during the Gala Dinner of the 30th CACCI Conference held on November 23-25, 2016 at Marriot Hotel in Taipei



Mrs. Dhara Wijayatilake from Sri Lanka declares that there are two joint winners of the Award - Ms. Seyedeh Fatemeh Moghimi from Iran and Ms. Gerelmaa Ulzii-Orshikh from Mongolia (right).

In conjunction with the 32nd CACCI Conference to be held in November 2018, CACCI is pleased to announce the launching of the 2nd Asia-Pacific Women Entrepreneur Award which will be presented alongside with the 8th CACCI Local Chamber Awards, 7th Asia-Pacific Young Entrepreneur Award. CACCI hereby calls on all Primary Members to submit their nominations.

The 1st Asia-Pacific Women Entrepreneur Award was presented as part of the activities to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of CACCI in 2016. The

Asia-Pacific Women Entrepreneur Award aims to recognize excellent women entrepreneurs in the Asia-Pacific rim who not only are successful in their business but also advocate corporate social responsibility for the good of their country.

The winner of the Award shall also be selected on the basis of her outstanding achievements in the following areas: (1) Business Acumen-40%; (2) Involvement in Non-profit Business Organizations or Associations and/or Involvement in CACCI activities-25%; (3) Leadership Qualities-20%; and (4)

Integrity-15%. Interested parties may wish to contact CACCI secretariat for the criteria and mechanics for the Award, the Nomination Form, as well as the summary schedule of the selection process.

Presentation of the three CACCI Awards will be made during the 32nd CACCI Conference to be held in Istanbul, Turkey sometime in November 2018. CACCI encourages Primary Members to participate in this Awards Program and help us in promoting it to their respective constituencies.

Culture shock: Business owners discover need to change their ways — and quickly

By Joyce M. Rosenberg, Associated Press (AP)

The results of a staff survey jolted Alex Slater into realizing how drastically his business needed a culture change.

About half the 19 employees at his Clyde Group public relations firm said they planned to leave in one to two years, and rated the environment as “average” or “needs improvement.” No one agreed with the statement: “I am adequately compensated.”

“It was a big, almost shocking, learning moment for me where I realized that I had been doing it wrong,” says Slater, who undertook the anonymous survey in 2015 after three staffers said they were leaving the Washington, D.C., firm. What he read was painful.

“A lot of this was personal on my part,” Slater says. “I really had to change my management style.”

That moment of truth is one that many small-business owners experience as their companies evolve. In some cases, the culture that worked for a startup is a bad fit for a more established, larger business. Owners in their 40s or 50s may have a different approach than younger staffers, making for an unhappy workforce. And when owners do see that there’s a problem, human resources consultants say, it takes a lot of listening and adapting to shift from a culture that turns employees off to one that motivates them.

Slater’s staffers, particularly employees in their 20s and 30s, said they were afraid to make mistakes for fear of being criticized, believed they couldn’t disagree with the boss and felt they had to work 60-hour weeks. Slater admits that yes, he chas-

tised staffers, and would send emails to employees at night and on weekends and expect a reply.

“The old rules were going to end up literally jeopardizing the future of our business,” he says.

After Clyde Group brought in a consultant, the culture changed. Forty-hour weeks are now the norm, Slater says. If someone makes a mistake, the company’s process is to learn from it. Staffers at all levels are asked for input on running the company. In a follow-up staff survey in 2016, 85 percent described Clyde Group as a fantastic place to work, he says.



In this April 7 photo, Alex Slater, center, managing director of Clyde Group, a public relations firm, talks with employees in Washington. (AP)

It Starts at the Top

Culture issues at small companies often start with owners or CEOs who are complacent, self-absorbed or too set in their ways, human resources consultants say.

“A lot of CEOs have the mentality of, ‘Here’s the stuff that I did to get here, so everyone else should work the same way,’” says Brian Kropp, head of the human resources practice at CEB, a consulting firm with headquarters in Arlington, Virginia. “When people deviate from that form, or want to do it a different way, the expectation of CEOs is, you’re doing it the wrong way.”

Moreover, office culture and employee needs are often a lower priority than trying to bring in business or develop new products and services.

“Owners wear so many hats and are so busy doing the business that they may not have time for some of the softer-skill things,” says Patti Perkins, owner of Calyx-Weaver & Associates, a human resources consulting firm based in Eagle, Idaho.

Often an owner’s epiphany comes because there’s a crisis, Perkins says. Staffers aren’t getting along, productivity falls or there’s an exodus of employees.

Growing Pains

At data analysis firm Summit Consulting, new business was pouring in but the fast-growing company was losing staffers and couldn’t hire fast enough. Managers took a harder look at people’s comments from their exit interviews. They realized the Washington, D.C., company wasn’t clearly organized, had poor internal communication and was a frustrating place to work, says Jennifer Folsom, the director of corporate development.

Summit Consulting was still operating with a startup culture even though it was 10 years old and had 50 employees, Folsom says. Important jobs like chief financial officer and human resources director were being done part-time by employees who had other assignments.

“No one knew who’s in charge. The communication piece was really wrong. People were hearing different things from different people,” Folsom says. And without a clear organi-

zational chart, younger staffers didn’t know what jobs they could advance to.

The solution was implementing clear tiers and teams, and hiring full-time managers to handle finances and human resources. The company also improved its retirement plan and other benefits. As a result, Summit Consulting now has about 100 staffers, and it takes less than a month to hire someone rather than about six months.

Passing the Baton

A culture change is progressing slowly at the Houston law firm Wilson Cribbs & Goren.

“Law firms are the most old-fashioned professional practices and one of the most old-fashioned business models,” managing partner Anthony Marre says. They’re run by senior partners, he says, while “young lawyers are looking for trust and responsibility, the freedom to interact directly with clients and to build their own practices.”

Senior partners recognized that they needed to prepare the firm to be passed on to the next generation, so they started giving Marre, who’s now 34, more responsibility, including recruiting younger attorneys. He became managing partner three years ago, and began suggesting changes like hiring marketing and business development consultants.

Among the changes: All the attorneys meet weekly, and while one focus is client issues, another is what the lawyers need for their own professional development.

“Not only are the younger attorneys more engaged at all levels, they are more enthusiastic than ever about their careers and contributions they are making to the law firm,” Marre says.

Source: China Post, April 14, 2017

**Join us for 32nd CACCI
Conference in
Istanbul, Turkey**



November 23-24

EBRD, EU and Turkish gov't supporting 15,000 female entrepreneurs

The EBRD, the Turkish Employment Agency (İŞKUR), the EU Delegation to Turkey and the Ministry of Labor and Social Security discussed the positive impact of the joint Finance and Advice for Women in Business program at an event in Ankara on November 22, 2017.

In 2014, the EBRD made a commitment to promote women's entrepreneurship in Turkey, pledging 300 million euros in dedicated credit lines to local banks for on-lending to companies run by women.

In order to create opportunities for women-led businesses to gain affordable financing from local banks, the EBRD partnered with five key Turkish lenders – Garanti Bank, QNB Finansbank, TEB, İş Bank and Vakıfbank - according to the statement.

Through their extensive branch networks, loans averaging 15,000 euros were provided to 14,400 companies in 79 out of 81 Turkish provinces, the Bank said. Two-thirds of the financing provided to date has been channeled to firms outside the large metropolitan areas of Istanbul, İzmir and Ankara, it added.

EU, gov't join effort

The EU and the Turkish government have joined the effort, with 38 million euros in grant funding. Donor funds enabled partner banks to make adjustments necessary to better serve the



women's banking market. One of these features is first-loss risk cover, which makes loans less risky and therefore more affordable.

Funds from the EU and the Turkish government have also helped connect 340 women-led firms in 42 Turkish provinces to local consultants and coaches and international advisers who have helped them grow their businesses and enabled training and mentoring opportunities. Advisory services

alone have helped create 800 new jobs, with many companies reporting a substantial increase in turnover.

In Turkey, only 30 percent of women participate in the workforce, compared with 70 percent of men. Women running their own businesses find it particularly hard to access affordable financing. With access to finance a key obstacle, women generally tend to borrow from friends and family rather than from a formal financial institution.

Since it was pioneered in Turkey, the Finance and Advice for Women in Business Women program has been rolled out to 16 other countries where the EBRD invests, according to the statement.

Creating opportunities for those who cannot access affordable financing, including female entrepreneurs, refugees, and companies in more remote regions, is a priority for the EBRD in Turkey, the Bank stated.

Source: Hurriyet Daily News, November 22, 2017

Forestry industry has growing appeal for Japan's young women

By Megumi Iizuka

The lure of nature and a slower pace of life are attracting a growing number of young women to Japan's traditionally male-dominated forestry business, and their participation may help it cope with an aging workforce and a shortage of manpower.

Junko Iizuka, a 33-year-old graduate of the prestigious University of Tokyo, quit her job as an organizer of international trade fairs about four years ago to join lumber company Tokyo Chainsaws in the village of Hinohara in western Tokyo. "I was attracted to work outdoors, in which I can directly make changes and try new things," she said, adding that what

impressed her about the company was that it not only logs and sells trees but also leads initiatives to protect forests and raise public interest in them.

It took her two years to persuade the head of the company to take her on, overcoming the concern that — given her slight physique — she would not be up to the physical demands of the job. She has since learned how to operate chain saws and other equipment. Although she saw her income decline, she was quite happy to swap commuting in packed trains for the "pleasure" of sweating while logging, pruning and weeding. Besides, she said, the physical work is not as hard as

it seems, given the machines used in the industry.

Masato Kida, public relations officer at the company, said that having the first female worker in the firm turned out to be a positive addition. "She is forward-looking, never complains, and has good sense," Kida said, adding that Iizuka is not considered physically inferior to the other workers.

Since having a child, Iizuka now rarely engages in physical work, and is currently focusing on promotional tasks, including the management of a 30-year investment project to grow forests. Forestry writer Kusuo Akahori said that more and



Junko Iizuka, 33, a worker at Tokyo Chainsaws, is seen in the woods in Hinohara, Tokyo, on December 15, 2017. KYOTO

more young women like Iizuka are showing a keen interest in the lumber industry. “Some employers even recruit women in particular, in the hope that they can communicate with customers well, with some companies beginning to get involved in new forestry businesses that require interaction with consumers,” he said.

According to the government’s national census, the number of women aged between 15 and 34 who are working in the logging industry rose to 230 in 2015 from 130 in 2010, although the figure covering women in all age groups in the industry dropped to 2,750 from 3,020 in the same period. The proportion of people irrespective of gender aged between 15 and 34 in the industry climbed to 18 percent in 2010 from 6 percent in 1990, Forestry Agency data showed, partly attributing the rise to government subsidies encouraging young people to join the sector.

But interest in forestry among women is also spreading outside the framework of careers. Female students, architects, educators, designers and others have formed more than 20 “forestry girls” groups across Japan since the first was launched in Kyoto about eight years ago.

Although their activities vary between prefectures, in Kyoto around 20 or 30 women mainly in their 20s and 30s publish free forestry newspapers, help out with logging, and even hold yoga or story-reading sessions in the woods for children. Naoko Matsuda, who heads the forestry girls group in Kyoto, said: “Many people join our activities hoping to get immersed in nature. Thanks to information shared through Facebook and other media, the forestry business has also come to be viewed as something cool.”

Japan is rich in timber resources, with two-thirds of its land covered by forests and trees planted in the wake of World War II reaching maturity for harvest. But the country’s lumber self-sufficiency rate stood at just 34 percent in 2016, though it has recovered from below 20 percent in the early 2000s.

Postwar reconstruction and housing demand once pushed up lumber prices, and the government encouraged the planting of conifer trees as construction materials. But pressured by cheap lumber imports prices later fell and many loggers left

the industry, deeming it unprofitable. Aging rural communities and young people moving to cities in search of jobs added to the declining trend in manpower in the sector, where income was about ¥1.1 million (\$9,700) below the average, according to a national tax agency survey in 2013.

But with the new interest in the industry, lumber companies themselves are beginning to cater to new needs and some have transformed their business styles, experts said.

“Low pay has been one of the serious bottlenecks for attracting personnel in the industry. But an emerging number of companies have started to generate profit by engaging in diverse activities along with conventional logging,” said Akahori.

These new forms of business have helped them offer stable pay and opened up ways for more women to work in the industry, even if they are not directly involved in physically demanding labor, he said.

For instance, Tokyo Chainsaws holds workshops and educational events while soliciting members to invest in planting and growing cedars or cypresses to support preserving healthy forests. Under its 30-year investment project, investors can participate in planting events and receive two trees thinned out as part of maintenance of the forest in return for every three trees they invest in.

The company has also been collaborating with the local government and communities to promote the use of more lumber products, which will eventually help create sustainable forests that with proper thinning and spacing should prevent landslides and effectively absorb carbon dioxide.

“I believe there are a lot of possibilities to explore the usage of lumber and wood products. I think women can also take advantage of their strengths in this area,” said Iizuka.

Source: Japan Times, January 3, 2018

Helping women achieve work-life balance

Last year, Keiko Yoshikawa, founder and CEO of Venus Style celebrated the company’s 10th anniversary. Venus Style conducts business in the fields of health, beauty and education for women, while operating thirteen Curves locations, which offer 30-minute exercise classes for women, as their core business.

Yoshikawa founded her company to support her two children after her divorce. “When I got divorced I didn’t have any skills to support myself. I was not aiming to become an entrepreneur, I was simply looking for a franchise business idea since my father was also involved in franchises and I had the know-how. Curves had just entered the Japanese market and seemed like the perfect opportunity,” Yoshikawa said.

Yoshikawa saw the opportunity in low initial investment, with female staff supporting female clients, membership-based business and health-related fields in an increasingly elderly society.

“Curves was originally introduced as ‘30-minute fitness for women’ with a stylish image of a women’s only gym from the

U.S. However, this was a bit intimidating for our target, which were those without regular exercise habits. Later the company changed the copy to a '30-minute exercise class for women,' which drastically changed the image, attracting members as a place where neighborhood women could go with their friends," she said.

Yoshikawa also operates a rehabilitation service using machines. Since it is located on the first floor of Curves, it motivates users to work on their rehabilitation and move on to Curves as they get better.

Until last year, Venus Style's employees were all women, working to support Shonan women's lives.

This makes employee education critical as Curves' staff will have an influence on the next generation when they become mothers. Yoshikawa earnestly wants women to become independent financially, physically and mentally, allowing them to make rational judgments.

To promote women's active participation and empowerment, while increasing the number of working mothers, Yoshikawa aims to implement policies for her staff to balance work and family life more easily. Additionally, she believes that her staff needs to acquire skills to work efficiently while they are single, so they can continue work after childbirth.

Yoshikawa considers beauty, health and the education business as her life's work, thus as a culmination of her years of work, she would like to give something back to society by holding various educational seminars for women.

As one of the 10th anniversary events, Venus Style was involved in the first Pink Ribbon Walk Shonan. "We hosted a breast cancer awareness seminar that led participants to get screened and some were found to have early stage breast cancer. These women shared their stories on what this meant to them, their families, their post-op situation and their emotional state. There is a different story for each woman. I wanted to do something to support them," said Yoshikawa.

For several years, Venus Style staff and Curves members participated in the Pink Ribbon Smile Walk in Tokyo. "Every year, the number of participants increased and I have been getting feedback that it is a meaningful activity. We thought it would be wonderful to have Pink Ribbon activities here to express my gratitude on our 10th anniversary," she said.

With cooperation of various local companies and Dr. Takako Doi, from Pink Ribbon Kanagawa, the first Pink Ribbon Walk Shonan was held to promote breast cancer awareness and educate women on the importance of screening to extend healthy life expectancy.

"After listening to Doi's speech in Fujisawa, participants walked 5 km to Enoshima. It was a great success. We are going to do it again this year. I want Venus Style to be a company that contributes to society," Yoshikawa said. To this end, she aims to address more issues together with her employees.

Also last year, terakoya, or a temple school event for



Keiko Yoshikawa, founder and CEO of Venus Style, at her office? in Fujisawa, Kanagawa Prefecture, on May 19. YOSHIAKI MIURA

children, was held based on William Glasser's psychology of choice theory. Yoshikawa aims to teach this sort of information and skills to single young women, as well as child rearing mothers, so that they can understand themselves better, manage things and improve their lives. As another educational event, this year, Venus Style will engage in the Orange Ribbon Campaign, an abuse prevention activity.

"I want my staff to serve our members out of love. Staff with positive views of themselves filled with love can offer great service," she said. To hire people with this quality, Yoshikawa has adopted principle-based recruiting. That is, she looks for

people who can strongly relate to and are willing to realize Venus Style's corporate mission.

She hopes Venus Style will encourage women to be strong, considerate and self-reliant. "In the end, I hope all our staff, members and customers will be full of happiness," Yoshikawa said.

This series has been prepared in collaboration with Enjin Co., which produces and operates a video website specializing in profiles of up-and-coming Japanese entrepreneurs.

Source: Japan Time, June 16, 2017

Not giving up was worth it

By Yueh-lin Ma, Commonwealth Magazine

Speaking of his work, celebrated architect Frank Gehry, the creative force behind the Guggenheim Bilbao Museum and the new Parisian landmark, the Foundation Louis Vuitton building, once said that if we knew in advance what we'd have to go through, we'd probably never go ahead and do it.

Even masters have moments of sadness and doubt, not to mention regular people. Yet perhaps that little extra measure of rebelliousness and commitment makes all the difference.

Exquisitely made up and dressed in a white dress and black high-heeled shoes inlaid with crystals, Anny Chan moves among a gathering of guests. Otto2 Artistic Aesthetics, the organization she founded 11 years ago, has moved to a new headquarters in Taichung, overlooking the National Opera House 27 floors below. Through the mist, the opera house's curved walls appear somewhat surreal.

Like the surreal detours on the entrepreneurial road, Chan could never have imagined what would transpire before she experienced it herself. Otto2 is currently Taiwan's largest children's arts education institution, spanning 140 direct operation and franchise branches in Taiwan and China, with bases as far off as Changchun in Jilin Province and Yinchuan in Ningxia. Last



year it achieved a turnover of NT\$160 million.

Chan has just returned from Shanghai. Having finally gotten regional rights and franchising models squared away, business in China has taken off, and the organization is projected to reach 200 branches sometime this year. In order to keep up with it all, Chan must spend three weeks out of each month across the strait in China.

Despite everything looking fabulous on the surface, Otto2 only managed to break even last year, finally crawling out from the NT\$90 million of debt accumulated three years ago.

Asked to speak to the defeats she suffered at first in the mainland market due to strategic miscalculations, Chan recalls her changes in attitude. “Back in 2013, I thought I could push through anything, but now I can own up to my weaknesses and tell my team what I need, so as to change the belief that ‘I can handle it all,’” she says.

Her confidence was justified, though, as she saw Otto2 through the financial crisis and established over 30 branches in Taiwan alone, yielding NT\$100 million of revenue.

Son’s Special Needs Spark Venture

Chan got into business out of personal interest, having worked as a curriculum planner and training center manager for Mitac Computer in Taipei before moving to Taichung with her husband. It was there in Taichung that she founded Songlin Education in 2000 with NT\$2 million in capital, partnering with Da-Yeh University and handling student recruitment and curriculum planning in the outreach department.

Facing signs of her 8-year-old son’s hyperactivity and the possibility of him being branded a “problem child,” in 2005 she took him to see a psychologist, who prescribed art therapy.

“My son would cry at school, saying he didn’t want to live. Meanwhile, at the university outreach education department, people often told me how happy they were in their studies. You can imagine what was going through my mind.” After looking at all the children’s painting and art classes on the market, she finally decided to establish her own children’s arts education organization.

Carried by her strength as a mother, Chan used the resources at hand, and, working with Da-Yeh University professors, mapped out a theoretical framework for material intended to stimulate children’s potential, establishing a teaching system based on creative guidance and diverse experiences for children ages two to 12. This approach quickly separated itself from the

fine arts programs on the market emphasizing drawing skill and emulating the work of others.

In the effort to raise her brand’s profile, Chan ventured into the department store sphere in 2007, reaching consumers at counters offering creative clay-making and baking classes and starting a trend of young children going to department stores to take arts and crafts classes. At its height, Otto2 reached 34 counters at department stores across Taiwan.

Global Financial Crisis

Before she could even celebrate her success, Chan found herself staring the global financial crisis in the face. Her department store operations began hemorrhaging money to the tune of NT\$2 million in losses each month.

“You want to stick to your guns, yet you don’t know how long you can hold on,” she recalls. Facing a gloomy economic outlook, Chan looked everywhere for funding, going so far as to pawn her wedding ring, sell off her insurance policy, and re-mortgage her home. Even worse, she had to face the doubts of her friends.

“They would tell me: Do you really have to do this? As a woman, why must you risk everything for your business. Such single-mindedness is dangerous!” Fortunately, she had the support of her husband, and as they tallied their losses at NT\$8 million they wondered whether they should cut their losses and close up shop.

Only when she received a small- to medium-sized business guarantee from the Ministry of Economic Affairs did she manage to secure a NT\$6 million bank loan to keep the operation afloat through difficult times. Regaining balance after rebounding, by 2010 Otto2 reached the NT\$100 million revenue mark.

Student of Finance

The lessons of the global financial crisis made Chan acutely aware of the importance of cash flow. These lessons in hand, she started taking classes, participating in trade associations, learning how to prepare capitalization increase proposals, and actively seek capital infusions. Meanwhile, she had decided to make a move across the strait into the Chinese market.

An infusion of US\$3 million in venture capital funding in 2012 boosted Chan’s spirits and made her more anxious to achieve something. The following year, Otto2 plunked down NT\$90 million to invest in four branches under direct company operation, three of which were located in China. In spite of such



Mongolia's female entrepreneurs make cosmetics from the steppe

By: Khaliun Bayartsogt, Contributing writer

From yak's milk to sheep's tails, traditional recipes are going abroad

ambitious designs for gaining brand momentum, things did not quite work out as hoped, as the top-performing branches faced constant complaints and were ultimately forced to shut down.

Failure in the China market put Chan, who had been focused simply on expanding funding and operations, in the awkward position of nearly being replaced as executive director in 2014, unable to continue leading Otto2's direction.

Ultimately, input from Dreamfield Image Company director Su Li-mei and Neil Shen, chairman of Taya Venture Capital Co. helped her to change course from heavy capital investment in direct-operation branches in China to lighter investment in franchising licensing — a strategy that finally put Otto2 back on track.

“Anny’s familiarity with children’s education and passion for arts education is exceptional, but she was comparatively weak in operational management, and finance and direct operations consumed too many of her resources.

Now that she has adjusted her strategy, things are looking much better, and her ability to get things done is finally shining through,” observes Shen.

“Anny strikes people as determined and willful, and always so full of energy, speaking with great excitement,” relates Tan Tian, director of an Otto2 franchise in the Hunan province city of Changsha, who first discovered Otto2 at a Taipei department store during a visit to Taiwan in 2012.

“I approached them about signing up as a franchise. I really appreciate Otto2’s philosophy of respecting every child’s unique personality, which is so different from the cookie-cutter model typically practiced in China.”

From interest and ideals to a profitable organization, from personal responsibility to experiencing the capitalist market, Chan has endured two especially trying junctures along the way.

Asked for advice to entrepreneurs, she offers, “Find a reason to do it that cannot be denied.” And looking back at those difficult times, she adds, “Fortunately, I didn’t give up easily.”



Source: China Post, March 20, 2017

From yak's milk to sheep's tails, traditional recipes are going abroad

A group of female entrepreneurs is developing a new use for the tens of millions of yaks, goats and sheep on Mongolia’s vast steppes -- a range of organic cosmetics and skin creams, often based on traditional recipes, that is rapidly attracting attention from foreign buyers.

Lhamour, the biggest of several companies launched to exploit the potential of locally made organic cosmetics, raised 100 million tugrik (\$41,180) in September 2017 from a bond issuance launched to finance new products, and is already exporting to Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore and Belgium.

The company, established in 2014, makes soaps from yaks’ and goats’ milk, as well as lip balm, hand creams, nipple creams for breastfeeding mothers, and a soap made from sheep’s tails. Its animal-based products are widely available in retail outlets in Ulaanbaatar, but Chief Executive Khulan Davaadorj said significant investment was needed in animal husbandry to allow the industry to grow.

“We need investment, innovation and technology to utilize this asset [livestock] to create value-added products that can compete internationally,” said Khulan, 30, who founded Lhamour after leaving a job in Mongolia’s wind power industry.

Fast-growing Lhamour, which employs 38 full-time workers at a factory and office building in Ulaanbaatar, remains small by the standards of the international cosmetics industry. But the company raised revenues by 83% in 2016 to \$220,000, and is targeting a further 105% increase to \$450,000 in 2017.

TRADITIONAL INNOVATION

Half of Mongolia’s 3 million people are nomadic



Otgontsetseg Ganbaatar, co-founder of organic soap maker Gilgerem, makes a batch of camel bone marrow soap. (Photo by Ochir Khaidui)





Lhamour, which makes horse oil soap, among other products, recently raised 100 million tugrik from a bond sale to finance its expansion. (Photo by Ochir Khaidui)

herders, and their 60 million livestock offer many potential opportunities for the development of organic products. However, sourcing materials remains a significant problem for the nascent cosmetics industry.

“It is difficult for us to source quality raw materials on a constant basis as many of our suppliers have never supplied in [this way],” Khulan said. “Mongolian animal husbandry is still very traditional [and] suppliers have a traditional mindset.”

Lhamour’s success has prompted the emergence of a number of other companies making organic cosmetics, many of which are competing for sales of sheep’s tail soap, a version of a traditional product that is reputed by Mongolians to be rich in calcium, protein and vitamins. Mongolian mothers often give sheep’s tails to infants, believing that sucking on them will make children strong and sturdy.

Sheep’s tail soap, which contains no added chemicals, is also thought to clean without removing moisture from the skin, which is especially useful in cold and windy Mongolia. Lhamour’s sales material claims that a product that works on the steppes will provide even greater benefits for women who live in less harsh climates.

However, other entrepreneurs have expanded the product range, indicating that there is substantial potential for innovation in the industry.

Battsetseg Chagdgaa, the 35-year-old co-founder of Gilgerem, another organic soap maker, began selling soaps made from camel bone marrow, sea buckthorn (an oily berry) and sheep’s tails in 2016. Battsetseg said she is also about to launch a soap made from camels’ milk, having been inspired by Lhamour and Goo, another organic skin care company that started operations at about the same time as Lhamour.

“I am proud of [Lhamour and Goo]; I respect them,” she said. “We call them the older sisters, and they are a good example for this industry. They spent their energy and finances to make everyone understand these organic handmade sheep’s tail soaps, which paved the way for my business.”

Battsetseg, who sells her soaps for \$2-\$3 each -- half the price of comparable Lhamour products -- keeps overheads low by operating from a two-room basement, employing only part-time workers, and selling her products in local supermarkets to reduce distribution costs.

Her camel bone marrow soap is based on traditional



Davaa Munkhdorj, an accountant, launched Moili lip balm, with ghee as the main ingredient. (Photo by Ochir Khaidui)

practice among herders in the Gobi Desert, where the product is used as a body lotion and is believed to heal bed sores and skin lesions. Bone marrow oil is also believed to prevent stretch marks during pregnancy because they contain high levels of collagen.

RECRUITING HELP

Battsetseg urged the Mongolian government to help promote entrepreneurial companies such as hers by exempting them from the country’s 10% value added tax and from income tax, also levied at 10%. She said the government could also help by reducing or eliminating customs duties on some imported ingredients required to make her products.

“Our soaps could have been sold even cheaper and could compete against imported soaps if the government exempts some of the taxes and really supports SMEs,” she said, referring to small and medium-sized enterprises.

All the organic cosmetics entrepreneurs said that much more research was needed to develop the industry. Battsetseg, who was previously a journalist, marketing manager and fashion stylist, said she is “addicted” to researching chemicals and aims to build a laboratory to study raw materials so she can produce more unique products.

Davaa Munkhdorj, a 28-year-old accountant, sells lip balm made using shar tos, or ghee made from yaks’ milk, under the brand Moili and is looking for factory facilities to expand her range. “Mongolia is full of natural resources, not just dairy products; we have so many herbs that can be a source of organic products, but they are not fully studied,” Davaa said.

Commentators say there is no shortage of budding entrepreneurs in Mongolia, suggesting that the initial success of the organic cosmetics industry may draw in more competitors, especially if export sales continue to grow.

“Young and educated Mongolians are increasingly going into startups, and are disinterested in becoming conventional salaried and -women [because of low wages] in both private and public sector,” said Gerel Orgil, CEO of East Maven, a public relations agency based in Ulaanbaatar that was one of Mongolia’s most successful startups in 2012. Gerel represented Mongolia at the 2017 U.S.-government-backed Global Entrepreneurship Summit in Hyderabad, India, in late November.

Source: Nikkei Asian Review, December 28, 2017

Motivating Young Women towards importance of Entrepreneurship

Dr. Manju Kalra Prakash
Sr. Consultant, Ministry of Women & Child Development India

The Indian Economy has been witnessing a drastic change since mid-1991, with new policies of economic liberalization, globalization and privatization initiated by the Indian Government. India has great entrepreneurial potential. At present, women involvement in economic activities is marked by a low work participation rate, excessive concentration in the unorganized sector and employment in less skilled jobs.

Any strategy aimed at economic development will be lop-sided without involving women who constitute half of the world population. Evidence has unequivocally established that entrepreneurial spirit is not a male prerogative. Women entrepreneurship has gained momentum in the last three decades with the increase in the number of women enterprises and their substantive contribution to economic growth.

The industrial performance of Asia-Pacific region propelled by Foreign Direct Investment, technological innovations and manufactured exports has brought a wide range of economic and social opportunities to women entrepreneurs.

This skills crisis is becoming more critical because the Indian economy is shifting. Not only will the traditional skills of reading, writing, and math be needed to thrive in this economy, but also technological savvy and self-direction.

With the pace of innovation, many of the jobs our youth will hold don't even exist yet. More than ever, we need to educate students to be continual learners.

These multi-pronged challenges will require a host of different solutions that better engage young people in their education, while also building stronger connections between communities, businesses, and schools.

We believe that expanding the availability of youth Entrepreneurship Education resources should be a critical part of this solution.

The women entrepreneurs are the potentially emerging human resource in the 21st century to overcome the economic challenges in global perspective. The Women of 21st century is no more a traditional resource confined to homes only, rather they are an educated, knowledgeable and The views expressed are personal of the author and not related to official work innovative part of the overall population possessing the capacity to transform economies into thriving enterprises.

Developing and developed nations have realized that developing women entrepreneurship is indispensable to flourish as economically dominant nation in the modern high-tech world. Therefore, creation of platforms and networks for entrepreneurial culture are prominent issues globally.

To quote Jawaharlal Nehru - "You can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of its women".



EMERGING ECONOMIC FORCE

Women owned businesses are highly increasing in the economies of almost all countries. The hidden entrepreneurial potentials of women have gradually been changing with the growing sensitivity to the role and economic status in the society. Skill, knowledge and adaptability in business are the main reasons for women to emerge into business ventures.

'Women Entrepreneur' is a person who accepts challenging role to meet her personal needs and become economically independent. A strong desire to do something positive is an inbuilt quality of entrepreneurial women, who is capable of contributing values in both family and social life. With the advent of media, women are aware of their own traits, rights and also the work situations.

The glass ceilings are shattered and women are found indulged in every line of business from pappad to power cables. The challenges and opportunities provided to the women of digital era are growing rapidly that the job seekers are turning into job creators.

They are flourishing as designers, interior decorators, exporters, publishers, garment manufacturers and still exploring new avenues of economic participation. In India, although women constitute the majority of the total population, the entrepreneurial world is still a male dominated one. Women in advanced nations are recognized and are more prominent in the business world.

The Government of India has defined women entrepreneurs - An enterprise owned and controlled by one or more women having a minimum financial holding of 51% or more, giving 51% or more employment to women.

The entry of women into business in India is traced out as an extension of their kitchen activities, mainly 3P's, Pickle, Powder and Pappad. But with the spread of education and passage of time women started shifting from 3P's to modern 3E's i.e., Energy, Electronics and Engineering.

More female entrepreneurship exists in developing countries where traditionally higher birth rates prevail. The law and customs of marriage have higher rate of influence whether a woman chooses to be an entrepreneur. Monolova, (2008).

The attitudes and employment practices in low income countries generally speaking are less likely to provide child care, health care and training opportunities to women as employees. At the same time, employers are less likely to provide a



comfortable workplace and a set of adequate work practices that allow a woman to both perform satisfactorily on the job and care appropriately for her children. Muhammad, (2008).

As a result, women in low income countries have strong incentives to create their own work environments that are compatible with their child rearing and household responsibilities at the same time. Gem report, (2004). This tendency is more strengthened in typically lower degree of involvement in child care by fathers in poorer countries. Consequently women look for home based business opportunities preferably. Brush, carter and gatewood, (2006). Issues related to woman's ability & willingness to create new businesses, concern exists about the survival & growth rates of female-owned businesses.

Out of the total 940.48 million people in India, in the 1990's female comprise of 437.10 million representing 46.5% of the total population. There are 126.48 million women work-force (representing 28.9% of the female population) but as per the 1991 census only 1,85,900 women accounting for only 4.5% of total self-employed persons in the country were recorded.

Majority of them are engaged in the un-organized sector like agriculture, agro-based industries, handicrafts, handloom and cottage based industries. Participation of women as industrial entrepreneurs, however is comparatively a recent phenomenon commencing from 70's era onwards.

There were more than 2,95,680 women entrepreneurs claiming 11.2 % of total 2.64 million entrepreneurs in India, during 1995-96. This is almost double the percentage of women (5.2%) among the total population of self employed during 1981. On this, a majority was concentrated in low-paid, low-skilled, low-technology and lowproductivity jobs in the rural and unorganized sector. Almost 79.4 million women workers were in the rural areas as against only 10% (86 million) in the urban areas.

Only 2.5 million women workers were in the organized sector and a small percentage of 12.4% were total employed. During the 8th, 5 year planning period the number of SSI's expected to rise from 1.7 million to 2.5 million adding 0.8 million in the 5 year period or 1.60 lakh every year. The rough estimate showed that amongst the SSI entrepreneurs approx.

9% were women entrepreneurs. Their participation, however, is increasing. Thus considering the trend women participation in another 5 years was more than 20%, raising the number of women entrepreneurs to about 5,00,000.

Therefore one could aim at developing atleast 3,50,000 women entrepreneurs during the 8th five year planning period through training and other developmental efforts. The present rate of 30% success in EDP training was likely to go up-to 45%



with growing experience and improved techniques of training and follow-up. Based on this assumption for getting 3.5 lakh women en-

trepreneurs it was necessary to train and support about 7.78 lakh entrepreneurs, during the aforesaid period.

As per the 2001 census report, there are 22.73% of women workers of the total working population including formal as well as informal sector. In the era of L.P.G (Liberalization, Privatization, Globalization) the Indian women entrepreneurs are very fast entering the non-traditional sectors, which indeed is in response to their greater awareness.

Work participation of Indian women is 22% as per 1991 census and triple in rural areas around 27% and in urban areas 9%, thus the role and involvement of women entrepreneurs in rural sector is tremendously enhancing, the literacy levels increased ratio is also a significant factor of this positive trend in the field of entrepreneurship.

The women entrepreneurs over the decades:

1. WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS OF THE FIFTIES: Compulsive factors led to the creation of women entrepreneurs.
2. WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS OF THE SIXTIES: Women began to aspire but also accepted the social cultural traditions.
3. WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS OF THE SEVENTIES: The women in this decade opened up new frontier. They had not only aspiration but ambition
4. WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS OF THE EIGHTIES: Women were educated in highly sophisticated, technological and professional education. They became equally contributing partners.
5. WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS OF THE NINETIES: This was the first time when the concept of best rather than male heir was talked about.
6. WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS OF THE 21st Century: "Jill of all trade The views expressed are personal of the author and not related to official work Some of the Successful Leading Business Women in India
 1. Akhila Srinivasan, Managing Director, Shriram Investments Ltd
 2. Chanda Kocchar, Executive Director, ICICI Bank
 3. Ekta Kapoor ,Creative Director, Balaji Telefilms
 4. Jyoit Naik, President, Lijjat Papad
 5. Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, Chairman and Managing Director, Biocon
 6. Lalita D Gupte, Joint Managing Director, ICICI Bank
 7. Naina Lal Kidwai ,Deputy CEO, HSBC
 8. Preetha Reddy, Managing Director, Apollo Hospitals
 9. Priya Paul, Chairman, Apeejay Park Hotels

Today many women entrepreneurs are diversifying into more technical businesses such as computers, software, technical equipment, etc., other than beauty products / parlour / saloon business, or boutiques, or even restaurants.

The factors that influence becoming entrepreneurs are – Economic independence, self-identify, self-confidence, self-motivation, achievement of excellence, developing risk taking ability

and equal status in society.

To conclude age is not a limit nor an exception to realize your true potential or the way you want to live your life. There are entrepreneurs who realize that they do not fit the cubicle job system at a later stage in their life and thus reverted to starting their businesses and then there are some who realized that the only way for them is to start their own business and be their own boss.

Women are increasingly the main breadwinners

Staff writer, with Central News Agency (CNA)



“Woman power is rising up in Taiwan,” said a recent government report, which showed that more women are becoming the main income earners in their households and that they have slightly higher disposable incomes than households where men are the main earners.

Women are the main income earners in 2.51 million households, about 30 percent of the nation’s total households, with an average disposable income of NT\$332,000 (US\$11,000) per family member, the figures from last year compiled by Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics (DGBAS) showed.

With the developing economy and changing values in Taiwan, women’s socioeconomic status has improved considerably, along with their participation in the workforce, resulting in women holding greater power in Taiwanese society, National Development Council Deputy Minister Kao Shien-quey said.

“The growth rate for women’s participation in the workforce is still slow. The government plans to invest more in public programs for childcare and healthcare for the elderly. This would alleviate the burden on many female providers, easing their concerns and the pressures of being in the workplace,” Kao said.

“In recent years, our government has assisted more women to become entrepreneurs and run small to medium-sized enterprises. This has allowed women to succeed through diligent effort, to increase their competitiveness and to spark creative innovation in business,” she said.

Kao said the trend is for society to become a “digital economy,” which would encourage more women to study science and engineering and to work in the information, computer and

telecommunication technology sectors, boosting growth and inclusiveness in those industries.

Taiwan had a total of 8.458 million households last year, an increase of 0.9 percent — or 72,000 households — from 2015, a DGBAS report showed.

Women headed about 2.51 million of these households, an increase of 827,000 households with a growth rate of 6.6 percent compared with a decade ago, the data showed.

“Although men still make up the majority of main income earners in families, this is a declining trend, as women are increasingly taking over that role,” Kao said.

The statistics showed a U-shaped distribution pattern for the population structure of the households headed by women, with 38.8 percent being women under the age of 25, 34.8 percent being seniors aged 65 and over, and 24.4 percent being women aged 35 to 44.

Compared with a decade ago, the under-25 category declined by about 9 percent, but all other age groups saw an increase, with the largest being an 8.6 percent increase among women 65 years of age and over, the report showed.

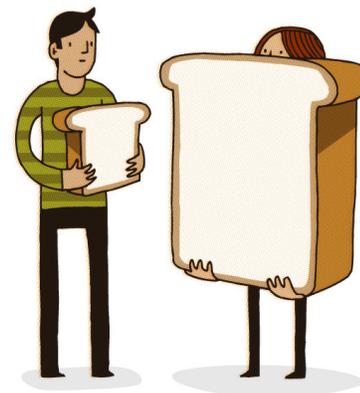
The report said that households where women are the main income earners tended to have more disposable income last year because they averaged 2.5 family members instead of the 3.3 family members in the households headed by men.

The survey was conducted using a questionnaire, which asked who the family’s main income earner was, DGBAS officials said, adding that studies were then done to compare trends between male and female main income earners.

The results can be interpreted to mean that more women are entering the workforce and that single women are choosing to become financially independent and to remain unmarried, officials said.

The age pattern shows that when a couple gets married, men still head up the majority of households as the main income earners, while the high proportion of women 65 years of age and over heading up households (34.8 percent) indicates that women are living longer than men, the officials said.

That households headed by women tend to have higher disposable incomes might be because more women are in single-parent situations and because wage levels have been rising for female workers, the officials added.



Source: Taipei Times. October 16, 2017

Young woman brings roads, water and banking to rural Indians

By Nita Bhalla / Thomson Reuters Foundation



Village head Chhavi Rajawat shows her father [centre] and other villagers something on her phone, Rajasthan, India, September 5, 2017. Thomson Reuters Foundation/Himanshu Sharma



Village head Chhavi Rajawat, talks to some of her villagers, Soda, Rajasthan, India, September 4, 2017. Thomson Reuters Foundation/Himanshu Sharma

As the sun begins to set on the village of Soda in western India, Chhavi Rajawat walks through the dusty streets, stopping to chat with residents who emerge from the wooden doorways of their homes to greet her.

Folding their hands together and bending to touch 39-year-old Rajawat's feet, women in colorful saris and elderly moustached men with turbans seek her help on everything from family feuds to neighborhood littering.

The scene is an unusual one for India's desert state of Rajasthan — a conservative patriarchal region known more for its high numbers of child brides than for empowering women — but Rajawat is accustomed to busting the traditional narrative.

Rajawat, who holds a master of business administration (MBA) degree, has not only been head of the village for the past seven years — she quit her city job at a multinational firm to do it, making history as India's youngest elected sarpanch, or village leader, in 2010.

"I know I don't fit the typical mold of sarpanch, which is a man, and usually an elderly one," said Rajawat, dressed in leggings, a loose top and hiking boots in Soda village, 80km from Jaipur, Rajasthan's capital.

"There are some officials who find it hard to take orders from me, not only because I am a woman, but also because I am younger than them. But the villagers here don't care and are more interested in the work I do ... that's what matters," she said.

However, Rajawat's story is more than just about shattering stereotypes.

As demands mount in the world's largest democracy for women to have more say at the highest levels of politics, her efforts at the lowest rung of governance make a compelling case of how effectively women can rule, if given the chance.

Since taking office, Rajawat's council has built roads, constructed toilets and brought water, power and even a bank to Soda's 7,000 residents, all thanks to a law which reserves at least

one-third of village council seats for women.

"The villagers asked me to stand for elections as it was required that the sarpanch be a woman," she said. "If it wasn't for the reservation policy, I don't know if I would be here and whether the development we've achieved would have happened."

Born in Jaipur — a tourist city known for its pink architecture and resplendent forts — and educated at private boarding schools and colleges across India, Rajawat's ancestral roots lie in Soda village.

Her grandfather, a retired decorated army officer, was Soda's sarpanch for 15 years until 1990 and Rajawat fondly remembers spending many of her summer holidays as a child in village with her parents and grandparents.

After finishing her MBA, she was working as a manager for telecom Airtel when a group of Soda's elders approached her at the age of 32 to stand as sarpanch.

"The village had seen little development for many years, and the residents knew me and my family well due to my grandfather previously being the village council head," she said.

"I understood the development challenges faced and wanted to help the village. Also, knowing that government funds would be limited, I thought I could use my business background to get support from the private sector for Soda," Rajawat said.

Leaving her corporate life in Jaipur, Rajawat moved to Soda — a collection of mud-and-brick hamlets built around two large reservoirs — to work as sarpanch, earning a monthly income of 3,500 rupees (US\$53.80), not even a fraction of her previous salary.

Since then, she has revived part of the reservoir — the only source of water for thousands of people — through an ambitious desilting project involving the community.

She has also constructed roads, built hundreds of toilets, improved power, piped water supplies and enlisted young volunteers to register the village's most needy inhabitants for

social welfare schemes, such as food subsidies.

Rajawat also managed to convince the country's biggest bank, State Bank of India, to open a branch in Soda, complete with a working ATM. It has so far opened savings accounts for more than 20,000 people from Soda and neighboring villages.

Re-elected in 2015 and now almost halfway through her second term as sarpanch, Rajawat admits that being a women in grassroots governance in India has not been easy.

Not only has she and her father faced a physical attack over a land dispute, but she has often had to deal with dismissive attitudes of low-ranking government officials, unaccustomed to dealing with women in senior roles.

Political opponents have also tried to disrupt her work — motivating residents to oppose decisions made by the village council, such as a project to plant trees or to establish a computer literacy training center.

“It's not been easy, but I have no regrets and still feel I have so much more to do,” said Rajawat. “But it's one thing to have reserved seats for women at village level, women should also be given these chances at higher levels of politics.”

Rajawat has a point.

Few women in India are encouraged to enter politics and those who join political parties are rarely selected to stand as candidates in polls. Often they face abuse, such as sexual harassment and character assassinations, yet few report it.

While the law reserving seats for women in village councils has resulted in more than 1 million women being elected, a similar draft law for state and federal parliament has been



Village head Chhavi Rajawat (seated) in her office in Soda village, Rajasthan, India, September 4, 2017. Thomson Reuters Foundation/Himanshu Sharma

sidelined by successive governments for two decades.

As a result, women are barely represented in the highest echelons of power in India.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) ranks India 147th out of 193 nations on female political representation, lower than nations such as Chad, Pakistan, Eritrea and Bangladesh.

Women hold only 12 percent of seats in India's lower and upper houses of parliament combined, compared to the global average of about 23 percent, the IPU said.

There are, of course, notable exceptions, such as former Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi and her daughter-in-law, Sonia Gandhi, who now heads the main opposition Indian National Congress.

India's foreign and defense ministers are also women, and there are a string of strong female politicians in states from West Bengal in the east to Rajasthan in the west.

However, these women are a minority.

Rajawat, who is living proof that opportunities for women in politics can boost social and economic development, said this needs to change.

“I think women leaders can make a significant difference. They are in better position to reach out to other women who for decades have never been asked or felt too shy to express their views to male leaders,” she said. “This is important, as women — who are often the carers in family — understand social problems like health, nutrition and education. All we need is the chance to change things.”

Source: Taipei Times, October 28, 2017

About CACCI

The Confederation of Asia-Pacific Chambers of Commerce and Industry (CACCI) is a regional grouping of apex national chambers of commerce and industry, business associations and business enterprises in Asia and the Western Pacific.

It is a non-governmental organization serving as a forum for promoting the vital role of businessmen in the region, increasing regional business interaction, and enhancing regional economic growth. Since its establishment in 1996, CACCI has grown into a network of national chamber of commerce with a

total now of 29 Primary Members from 27 Asian countries and independent economies.

It cuts across national boundaries to link businessmen and promote economic growth throughout the Asia-Pacific region. CACCI is a non-governmental organization (NGO) granted consultative status, Roster category, under the United Nations.

It is a member of the Conference on NGOs (CoNGO), an association of NGOs with UN consultative status.

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