Announcing the East-West Center’s
2007 Changing Faces Women’s Leadership Program

Women and Peacebuilding in Asia, the Pacific, and the United States

Program dates: July 8–19, 2007
Location: Honolulu, Hawai’i

Women in both the public and private sectors with 5–12 years of professional experience from Asia, the Pacific and the United States eligible to apply. Application requirements and details available online at:

www.eastwestcenter.org/sem-ld.asp
(Click on the “Changing Faces” link)

Or send an email to:
Seminars@EastWestCenter.org

Application deadline:
March 30, 2007

Alumnae Reunite for Unique Experience

The Changing Faces program celebrated its fifth anniversary in 2006 with a reunion program in Thailand. Seventeen alumnae traveled from the United States and around Asia Pacific to participate in a day of meetings in Bangkok and an overnight field visit to Surat Thani province to look at sustainable development and community based tourism issues.

The outstanding experience in Surat Thani was organized by Potjana Suansri (CF2004) and her colleagues at Bangkok-based REST (Responsible Ecological Social Tours).

In this essay Hasina Kharbhik (CF2006) from India shares her observations on this special program.

The 2006 Changing Faces Women’s Leadership Program took place July 9–20, with the theme of “Women’s Political Empowerment.” The program included 12 participants from around the United States and the Asia Pacific region. The seminar consisted of seven days of workshops and meetings in Honolulu and a four-day study tour to Thailand.

While in Honolulu, the participants had lots of contact with the local community. On the political theme, the group met with two members of the State House of Representatives, Cynthia Thielen, Assistant Minority Floor Leader and member since 1990, spoke passionately about the need for women to be active in politics beyond working on campaigns or supporting parties, seeking office themselves. Women need to be in positions of power, not just supporting a person in power from the sidelines, since this is what will bring a

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Unique Experience

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I found the community to be very enterprising, business oriented, and that the community-based type of tourism can do wonders in boosting the economy. Indeed the host-guest relationship of community based tourism can effect a change for a sustainable future. All it needs is more planning and effective co-ordination of organizations such as the REST, and proper guidelines and policies of the government.

Therefore like the freshness of the sea breeze whispering through the pristine mangrove forests, there is no doubt that community based tourism, with its uniqueness and novelty, will flourish.

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Alternatives

By Roopa Rathnam, CF2005

When my mother passed away, I found myself at the end of a precipice, not knowing how life would go on to the next moment for me, who had stayed behind. As things would have it, I didn’t have to take any decisions. My family and I were swept into a battery of rituals that we were supposed to perform for the family member who had passed away. Being informed of perspectives other than those that established and perpetuated those rituals, my sister and I were often discomforted in the following 13 days, the stipulated period of grief in a Hindu family. Yet, strangely, both of us felt comforted with the availability of a formal platform for our loss and for the ceremony that helped draw out the grief that was in our hearts.

It was around that time that I began to acknowledge the importance of rituals and ceremonies for human beings, to play out their happiness and grief, their love and their beliefs. However, as I mentioned before, I was hugely uncomfortable subscribing to the rituals that were available to me as part of the religion and culture of my land, mainly because they were set in a value system that was unequal and exclusive – on the basis of gender, caste and other aspects of one’s identity.

When I attended the Changing Faces Seminar in 2005, a year from these realizations, I was still trying to weave for myself a new tapestry from these threads in my mind. That’s when I met a master craftsperson in Puanani Burgess, who (Continued on page 7)

The Code

By Jaileen F. Jimeno, CF2003

The election season in the Philippines is about to heat up again. In the next couple of weeks, party conventions with balloons, clowns and politicians will be held. News about clowns, er, candidates of various shades, motives and aspirations will hit the airwaves, newspapers and internet sites. The hoopla ends in May.

Of late, there’s a growing trend in the Philippines where newsreaders and public affairs program hosts throw their hat into the political ring—and win. This time, and in future elections, I am confident our network will be better equipped in dealing with this and a host of other “host” issues.

Early this year, GMA Network approved a set of rules where those who face the camera for news and public affairs cannot turn into politicians with ease. They have to declare their political intention—and quit their job—a year before a scheduled election. They may rejoin the network a year after the polls, depending on the final decision of top management. Since elective posts only carry a three-year term, this effec-

A New Point of View

By Nguyen Thi Phuong Vinh, CF2005

Before I went to the Changing Faces program, I used to have only two words to describe things: either right or wrong. And I was firm to protect what I believed was right. The people from different cultures I had chance to visit and talk to during the program, including wonderful ladies of CF, their living and working approach, and their achievements have changed my way of thinking. I came to see things from different angles. And I realize that I became more tolerant. This has helped me navigate through difficult situations more easily.

One such situation was in a workshop within the component of Capacity Building for Vietnam Farmer’s Union (VNFU) under the Agriculture Sector Program Support. The intermediate objective of the VNFU component is by the end of the component period in 2006 the VNFU will have improved its capacity to operate as a member-driven organization representing the rights and benefits of farmers and thereby contributing to the national agricultural and rural development.

The workshop, for which I was hired as the facilitator/moderator, was one of the efforts to establish voluntary farmers groups as a basic unit to collect farmers’ needs and deliver demand-driven production services. It was to formally report on the findings of a previous baseline survey on farmers’ assoc-

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Participant Action Plans

As part of the Changing Faces program, participants created individual action plans. The following are ideas they presented to the group:

Nurul Azkiyah works with female members of local councils in Indonesia and wants to see these women equipped for their positions and capable of voicing the interests of their constituents. Her goals for the coming year are to have 150 female members from 33 provinces around Indonesia attend capacity building workshops, to build a working caucus of female members from around the country, and to distribute gender awareness campaign tools to at least half of the 175 local councils.

Hsieh Huai-hui wants to enhance the profile of international work within the Democratic Progressive Party in Taiwan and improve the working conditions for her department. To do this she will seek changes in the work structure, to make it flatter and less hierarchical and to form an advisory body for the international department made up of high-profile party officials and members of various professional groups who will be able to bring diverse voices to the party’s international work.

Jiang Chulin’s vision is to create a supportive environment for rural women’s leadership in her home province of Guizhou. She wants to see cooperation between local governments and community-based organizations to recognize the role of rural women’s leadership and enhance their capacity. This issue is timely as rural areas in China begin to meet with the forces of globalization in the agricultural sector and the feminization of labor in this sector.

Dora Jok works with rural women in Sarawak and sees the need for their greater participation in community decision-making. Her work in the coming year will focus on two goals: at the community level, conducting capacity building workshops and training of trainers in leadership and advocacy skills; and for her organization, to enhance their network and funding stability by maintaining and building new partnerships with other NGOs and the government, developing a broader base of volunteer support, and identifying potential new funders.

Shazia Junejo works on capacity building for women elected officials in local government, a big task given that there is a 33 percent reservation quota for women at the district, tahseel, and union council level. These women face a deeply ingrained bias against women’s participation in politics, marginalization to “soft” issues of health and education, and even lack of basic facilities such as women’s restrooms at district council buildings. Shazia will conduct a needs assessment of women councilors and then oversee the development and delivery of basic training courses that will help prepare these elected officials for success in serving their constituents.

Jung Se-hee works on gender inequality in the Korean legal system in her work at the Ministry of Legislative Affairs. Her mission is to find elements in Korean law that are discriminatory against women and work with relevant government ministries to rectify these. For the next year, she will work on forming a committee within her Ministry to review discriminatory elements and advocate for redress of these

A New Point of View

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Being the workshop moderator, I was requested by the Project Advisor to facilitate discussion actively and reach an agreement over the issues. At one point during the workshop, when the participants were active in giving solutions, the Project Director stood up and said that he could not agree with the participants on those solutions, and that I should not listen to them because there were so many opinions. He proposed that in order to save time, he would suggest a process for everyone to follow.

I saw that the participants were upset. The Director, rarely traveling to the communes, did not understand their local conditions, yet often dictated them to do this and that. Nonetheless, in the workshop the participants could not utter a word because the Director was their big boss. If this happened before I went to the Changing Faces program, I would have stated my viewpoint (that I could not agree with the Director) and continued the workshop against his wish. Now that I was more culturally sensitive, I understood that the Director got used to the traditional top-down approach. So, I acknowledged his suggestion, and that I understood he wanted a good thing for the project by sharing his knowledge and experience. On the other hand, I also said during the small group discussion, several participants raised their concerns about the project’s impacts and they wanted to contribute some ideas to solve those problems. I was backed up by many participants in the workshop.

By this point, the farmers were more confident to voice up their concerns. And finally, the Director had to agree with their solutions. Later on, he came to congratulate me on my success to conduct the workshop in a more participatory way.

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Participant Action Plans

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within the State Council and to the President.

Lilia Kapuniai’s vision is that of a strengthened community of Native Hawaiian non-profit organizations. In the coming year she wants to expand the services of the Council for Native Hawaiian Affairs’ Grants Training and Technical Assistance Institute by establishing a leadership exchange program serving 10 Native Hawaiian community-based organizations. This program will increase the capacity of these 10 organizations that have identified leadership development as a weakness. To do this, she will recruit interested organizations and begin with a leadership assessment, followed by formulation of individual programs to address leadership development needs for each organization, and training and coaching throughout the year that will build the capacity of participating organizations.

Hasina Kharbhih is focusing her action plan on the issue of human trafficking, particularly child trafficking. Within her state of Meghalaya, she has already worked extensively on this issue with government, police, and other NGOs to develop a system for rescuing victims of child trafficking and to prevent trafficking. The “Meghalaya Model,” also has been introduced in the eight northeastern states of India. She is going to lobby and build up state-level capacity in the northeast to ensure the application of the model in all participating states, and develop a uniform response system and better lines of communication for dealing with child trafficking.

Li Xinling is a journalist by trade but also is an environmental activist. Her organization, Friends of Green, is facing a “bottleneck phase” in its development and she wants to move the group beyond this. In the Friends of Green’s next stage of development, she wants the organization to focus on reaching the children of her city, Tianjin, with environmental education. To this end, she will be working on increasing the organization’s membership base, linkages with government, and contact with schools.

Nikki Randall is a state legislator in Georgia and has taken a particular interest in addressing the needs of women in her district living with HIV/AIDS. She has been working with a constituent group, the Sisterhood Network, on this issue and now wants to help the group become more established. In the coming year she will work with the group to complete the 501C-3 incorporation process, develop an initial vision for services the group can offer and recruit volunteers in relevant professional fields (counseling, health education, etc.) to deliver these services, explore possible partnerships with social services agencies and other community groups, and secure start-up funding.

Maeve Taylor has a big vision: that people throughout the world will value the environment and want to protect it. To pursue this vision she will begin with her own city of Anchorage and a public awareness campaign to get the citizens of Anchorage to view Alaska’s national wildlife refuges as important and relevant to their lives. Strategies for working toward this goal include sponsoring environmentally-themed social events for youth and “20-somethings” featuring local bands, publishing feature articles in local papers and working with the local National Public Radio affiliate to run stories about the refuges, and helping the Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges organization to expand its membership base and programs offered.

Tran Thanh Tuyen is concerned about the quality of groundwater in Vietnam’s Mekong delta area, which is threatened by the expansion of agriculture and industry in the region. To address this, her organization will convene a workshop of scientists and relevant local leaders to discuss the issue and identify priorities for how to protect groundwater. The group will need to conduct a field survey to set up monitoring capability and determine the greatest areas of vulnerability, after which it will identify a set of strategies for protection.

The most important thing that I gained from the program is that no matter what your country’s place for women may be, women all over the world are finding ways to make a difference.
—Nikki Randall, United States

The most important thing that I would take away with me is that women leaders all over the world face the same problems, and we all have the courage to change, given the capacity and skills to do so.
—Hasina Kharbhih, India
transformation to politics, changing the rules of the game and the reputation politics has for being a “dirty game.”

Maile Shimabukuro, a member since 2003 representing the district of Waianae, also met with the group. Ms. Shimabukuro discussed her experiences working in Waianae, a district facing difficult social challenges including unemployment, drugs, and homelessness, with the Legal Aid Society and in politics. Her advice to the group was always to strive to be uncomfortable, not to get too settled in a routine that would dull your edge, and to work in a job that you would be happy to volunteer doing, work that one finds really inspiring and energizing.

During the week in Honolulu, the Changing Faces participants visited two outstanding women leaders at their offices: Cheryl Kauhane Lupenui, President and CEO of the YWCA of Oahu, and Suzanne Case, Executive Director of the Nature Conservancy. The participants had many questions for Ms. Kauhane Lupenui, a dynamic leader who was the youngest person ever to take up the YWCA of Oahu’s CEO position when she came into the job in 2001. The Asian participants in particular were interested to hear how the YWCA connects with the community to encourage a sense of volunteerism and involvement, something that many of their organizations seek to do in communities where women have been largely confined to the domestic sphere.

Following the meeting at the YWCA, the group had a short walk to the Nature Conservancy office just a few blocks away to meet with Suzanne Case. Ms. Case began with a presentation on the Conservancy’s work in Hawai’i and around the Asia Pacific region, and the challenges of balancing economic development and conservation that both developed and developing countries face. In her comments on leadership, Ms. Case described how she made a deliberate decision not to try to fit in to “good old boys” network of fundraising when she became Executive Director. Instead of networking through golf and drinking, she chose to genuinely be herself and connect with people in different means, while keeping within her team those who are able to network in the more traditional ways as necessary.

A day-long site visit to Waiahole Valley gave the group a unique opportunity to see the island’s rural, windward side, while learning about community development projects taking place in the farming community. Amy Luersen, a resident of the Waiahole area and community activist who works for the Hawai’i Community Foundation, met the group in the morning and gave the participants their first orientation to the area and to Hui Ulu Mea Ai, a nonprofit community development corporation established in 1981.

After a short drive and walk up into the valley, the group met up with Charlie and Vivien Reppun who have lived and farmed in the valley for years. Access to abundant, flowing water from the nearby stream is crucial for cultivation of taro, a Hawaiian staple, and Mr. Reppun discussed the battles that area farmers have fought with the Hawai’i State Commission on Water Resource Management and in the court system to have water that has been diverted from windward Oahu streams, like Waiahole, returned. The group got an up close and personal look at the life cycle of taro and even got to experience the taro patch first hand, wading barefoot in the muddy lo‘i with Mr. Reppun to try their hands at pulling weeds from between the young plants. An unconventional learning experience, but appreciated by all!
The Code

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atively cuts a journalist-cum-politician’s on-air appearance to a year. The scheme is also expected to inhibit those who harbor dreams of getting into public office via the journalist’s route: a year without media exposure considerably weakens a candidate’s chances of winning in elections where name and face recall spell doom or domination.

The policy on political candidacy is just one of the many new rules that now govern our department. Our on-cam people are now required to declare in writing the political, business and corporate, religious and social groups, including fraternities and sororities they belong to. Like government officials, they now fill out a form to identify their relatives holding key positions in government, religious and business sectors.

They can’t join rallies either, as they are barred from participating in any activities that advocate, support, or oppose any politician, religious leader, political party, group or cause. They are also asked to report attempts by persons and entities to influence the editorial content of our news and public affairs programs. They are instructed to return gifts costing P300 ($6) up. There is also a section that explicitly prohibits anchors from engaging directly or indirectly in the public relations business. And to level the playing field between them and program talents, they are required to abide by program standards, rules and regulations, and “to show the highest degree of propriety and professionalism at all times.”

And to ensure everyone’s compliance, these policies have been made part of our anchors’ contracts.

We’re not aiming to legislate good manners and right conduct here. But in a department that continues to expand, some rules have to be firm, and written down.

And most of all, it was a commitment I made when I took part in the 2003 Changing Faces Leadership Program.

Alternatives

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helped me see both the importance of ceremony and the liberation that comes with practicing alternatives that are based on the values of equality and respect, to the festivals and rituals I had grown up with.

Soon after I returned home, I was part of a conversation where two of my colleagues were arguing about the practice of a sister tying a thread on a brother’s wrist, as a request to protect her in her lifetime, in a particular festival in India. While one of my colleagues wanted to do away with the entire festival since she felt that it perpetuated the thought that women were helpless beings dependent on men for their survival, the other insisted that she felt good expressing herself on a specific day in terms of her affection for her sibling and hence, should have the right to celebrate this festival. My new found understanding of alternatives in customs allowed me to identify for her an alternative tradition, whereby she could write a letter—as opposed to tying a thread, which is traditionally seen as a request for protection—to both her brothers and her sisters, thereby opposing the trend of only accessing the male sibling on that day.

The first letter, that breaks the old and rings in the new tradition, could be about the very effort to do away with the thread and its significance as it had come to be in society and the possibilities of showing love in other ways. Once this became a practice in a family, it could also become one of those few times that siblings get to catch up on the other’s life and all the changes that they have been facing in the year gone by.

This conversation helped us all get introduced to the idea that we do need special occasions and festivals but can introduce newer practices that we are more comfortable with, in our paradigm of justice and equality.

Changing Faces Alumnae

Please keep in touch with us!

Send updates to SinesA@EastWestCenter.org to stay plugged in to the network.

We had a very successful alumnae reunion in 2006 and look forward to more in the years to come. We want you to be a part of them!
About the East-West Center

The East-West Center is an education and research organization established by the U.S. Congress in 1960 to strengthen relations and understanding among the peoples and nations of Asia, the Pacific, and the United States. The Center contributes to a peaceful, prosperous, and just Asia Pacific community by serving as a vigorous hub for cooperative research, education, and dialogue on critical issues of common concern to the Asia Pacific region and the United States. Funding for the Center comes from the U.S. government, with additional support provided by private agencies, individuals, foundations, corporations, and the governments of the region.

The Center carries out its mission through programs of cooperative study, training and research. Professionals and students from the United States, Asia and the Pacific study and work together at the East-West Center to better understand issues of common and critical concern and explore mutually beneficial ways of addressing them.

About East-West Seminars

East-West Seminars programs provide short-term educational experiences for policymakers, professionals and scholars from Asia, the Pacific and the United States. Seminars focus on critical issues affecting the region. Program activities facilitate interaction among participants in an effort to build a genuine Asia Pacific community. Through this dialogue, the East-West Center strives to be a catalytic force for maximizing regional cooperation and minimizing conflict.

EAST-WEST CENTER

EAST-WEST SEMINARSD
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