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How Is Asia Gender Network Pushing for More Pan-Asian Advocacy?

AVPN's Asia Gender Network becomes the first pan-Asian network dedicated to the funding advancement of women and girls.

- ◀ According to recent reports from the World Economic Forum, the world at large is still decades away from achieving total gender equality. In Asia, which holds 60% of the world's population, that number stretches to 70 years — and in East Asia, more than 160. Pair that with the backslides from the pandemic and the resulting “She-cession,” more than 2 billion Asian women are facing a road to gender equality even more difficult than in years past.



Members of the Asia Gender Network celebrate the founding of their organization with AVPN. (Image Credit: AVPN/Asia Gender Network)

To combat this crisis, the [Asia Gender Network](#) has become the first pan-Asian network committed to mobilizing financial, human, and intellectual capital toward gender equality.

Formed in partnership between the [Asian Venture Philanthropy Network](#) (AVPN) and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Asia Gender Network seeks to get to the root of critical gender issues shaping the future of the Asian continent, particularly in underserved regions where an influx of capital could make the most impact.

“This is not just another women’s network,” says Naina Subberwal Batra, CEO and Chair of AVPN. “Using Asian capital rooted in Asia and backed by 18 influential female Asian leaders, the Asia Gender Network will use its resources to amplify initiatives and scale solutions for some of the most neglected or underrepresented sectors that the region faces.”

AVPN is a unique funders’ network based in Singapore. Members are committed to building a vibrant and high impact social investment community across Asia through advocacy, capacity building, and platform management. Known for its cross-sector approach, AVPN actualizes programs under all kinds of umbrella, each dedicated to furthering the advancement of underserved peoples across the Asia Pacific region.

Now, with the launch of the world’s first pan-Asian gender funding network, AVPN is reaffirming its commitment to gender equality in a part of the world hit heaviest by pay gaps, work imbalances, and other gendered crises.

“Our mission is to move financial, intellectual, and human capital to improve outcomes for women and girls across Asia,” reads the organization’s mission statement. “Members of the Asia Gender Network support a wide variety of causes – locally, regionally and globally. From education to health care, leadership development to improving livelihoods, women in the workplace to girls in technology, justice for survivors of violence to ending modern slavery, each Asia Gender Network member brings passion, action and generosity to projects that empower women and girls in Asia.”

Unlike other localized women’s networks, which often focus on one community, country, or population, the Asia Gender Network looks at the Asia Pacific region as a whole, identifying opportunities for collaboration across country borders as well as smaller-scale funding for grassroots organizations. No project is too large or too small!

The network is made up of 18 Asian women committed to the advancement of women and girls in their home countries and beyond.

“We need women in all places where decisions are being made and we need more women in leadership roles if we are to move forward towards gender equality,” said Meiling Guo, a network member from China.

In addition to creating a platform for advocacy and action, the hope of the Asia Gender Network is to stand as an emblem for the world’s wealth holders to see the impact of collaborative funding.

AVPN, the Asia Gender Network’s parent organization, follows an impact investment structure of philanthropy. Rather than providing immediate relief from disasters or on-the-ground programs for women and girls, AVPN focuses on funding the organizations that make these programs a reality.



“Women have a proven track record for amplifying their impact—they reinvest 90% of their income into their families,” said Asia Gender Network member Renyung Ho, speaking from Singapore. “To create economic progress and improve outcomes for all of Asia, we need to invest in female entrepreneurs.”

In a way, AVPN could be described as a mix between Women Moving Millions and an impact investment circle: by leveraging funds to invest in companies and organizations rather than in specific campaigns, AVPN seeks to further its impact by investing directly in the future of the Asia Pacific region.

Mercedes Lopez-Vargas, a network member from the Philippines, put it best.

“When women work together, incredible things happen,” she said. “As a member of the Asia Gender Network, I am proud to be working to help women and girls across Asia achieve gender equality.”