

## PART 4: International Symposium and Exchange Program

### ○ International Symposium

#### Connecting the Bridges -Women Entrepreneurs in Asia-Pacific Countries-

##### 1. Date and Venue

Date: Sunday, November 18, 2018

Venue: Hotel East 21, Tokyo

##### 2. Participants

Number of bridge women: 22

Number of supporting organizations: 8

Participants: 85

Host and organizing members: 22

##### 3. Program

**13:00-13:05 Opening Remarks**

**13:05-13:15 Outline of the Program and Study**

**Ms. Yoshiko Ogawa**, Senior Consultant, IC Net Limited

**13:15-13:35 Keynote Speech**

“Role of Business Associations and Importance of Networking in Supporting Women Entrepreneurs Expanding Business Overseas”

**Ms. Mom Luang Preeyapun Sridhavat**,

Chair of AWEN Executive Board, ASEAN Women Entrepreneurs Network (AWEN)

**13:35-14:25 Panel Discussion**

**Theme:** “Women Entrepreneur’s Challenges in Expanding Business Overseas”

###### Panelists

- **Ms. Midori Ogino**, CEO, BROWN SUGAR 1ST. Co., Ltd.
- **Ms. Ayaka Yamashita**, Member of Board/Director, EDAYA Research Cordillera
- **Ms. Lyn Lee**, CEO, Awfully Chocolate Pte. Ltd.
- **Ms. SungUn Chang**, CEO, YOLK

###### Moderator

**Ms. Mari Hamada**, CEO, Nadeshiko Voice

**14:25-15:00 Panel Discussion (Business Associations)**

**Theme:** “Business Associations Supporting Women Entrepreneurs”

**Panelists**

- **Ms. Kaoru Fujisawa**, President, The Japan Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry Business Women’s Clubs/ President, The Tokyo Chamber of Commerce and Industry Business Women’s Club
- **Ms. Fadilah Majid**, Vice-President/Head of women’s wing, Singapore Malay Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- **Ms. Rina Zoet**, Head of Permanent Committee for Secretariat General, Indonesian Business Women’s Association

**Moderator**

**Ms. Kyoko Yokota**, CEO, Colabolabo Co., Ltd.

**15:00-15:10 Introduction of Business Associations**

**Ms. Etsuko Ikeda**, Senior Consultant, IC Net Limited

**15:10-15:40 Break**

**15:40-16:35 Group Discussion**

“Challenges of Women Entrepreneurs and Ways to Overcome in Expanding Business Overseas and Necessary Support for Women Entrepreneurs”

**16:35-16:40 Summary of the Group Discussion**

**Ms. Machiko Osawa**, Professor, Faculty of Integrated Arts and Social Sciences, Japan Women’s University/Director, Research Institute for Women and Careers

**16:40-16:45 Closing Remarks**



#### 4. Group Discussion Results

In the group discussion, the guests and general participants were divided into 10 groups. Each group talked about, and found solutions to, worries and troubles that they face in starting business. The discussion themes were selected from typical challenges that women entrepreneurs face.

Theme	Advice from the guests / Ideas from general participants
1. How to survive the third year of operation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Networking is important when overcoming various issues coming up in the third year. Through business networks, it is possible to get trustworthy staff, advice on business expansion, and hints for solving a wide range of issues.</li> <li>➤ To get connected with other female entrepreneurs, it is good to participate in events such as seminars and workshops.</li> <li>➤ Experienced women entrepreneurs with lifestyles and business philosophies similar to yours will be good mentors who can provide useful advice.</li> </ul>
2. Issues that entrepreneurs face and solutions to them (Funding)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Business and financial plans should be well prepared and presented at seminars and consultation meetings organized by support groups and financial institutions so that they will be attractive to investors.</li> <li>➤ Crowd-funding, financial management skills, and incorporating social issues into business would facilitate your financing.</li> <li>➤ To obtain funds for overseas expansion, the first thing to do is to collect information appropriate to the business such as size of operation.</li> </ul>
3. Issues that entrepreneurs face and solutions to them (Except Funding)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Means such as SNS are effective in recruiting good people. It is also important to develop human resources through training on soft skills (interpersonal skills such as the ability to communicate well with other people and work in a team), imparting values, and promoting flexible working environments for work-life balance.</li> <li>➤ To have customers understand the value of your products, you should first make your employees fully understand the products.</li> <li>➤ When you need ideas and advice, the Chamber of Commerce and the Rotary Club are good places to go and find a range of potential mentors.</li> </ul>
4. Difficulties in expanding business overseas and solutions to them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ When recruiting staff, you need to see if you and the candidate share the same values. Setting a probation period is useful, but you need to see if the attitude of the staff member changes when a full contract is signed after the period.</li> <li>➤ For expansion, it is better to choose a country where you understand the local value system. Communication can be hard at first, but it will be easier as you understand more about the language and the local ways of life.</li> </ul>
5. How to support women entrepreneurs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Opening portal sites for foreign entrepreneurs with collection of updated information on laws and regulations can promote women's business expansion overseas.</li> <li>➤ Start-up support for small businesses by local governments and incubation facilities will be useful for novice women entrepreneurs.</li> <li>➤ Simplification of the entry process for business contests will help promote women entrepreneurs' participation. It is also necessary for financial institutions and support organizations to work together to support them with funding and financial management.</li> </ul>

## ○ Exchange Program

### “Women Entrepreneurs for Aiming to Solve Social Issues”

#### 1. Date and Venue

Date: Monday, November 19, 2018

Venues: Cabinet Office and Makanai Cosmetics

#### 2. Participants

Number of bridge women: 18

Number of supporting organizations: 8

#### 3. Program

##### 13:00-13:30 Introduction of Japanese women entrepreneurs' business

- **Ms. Yuka Mitsuhashi**, Founder, MO-HOUSE Ltd.
- **Ms. Elli Takagaki**, Founder and CEO, Paper Miracles
- **Ms. Mayumi Tachikawa**, Founder and CEO, Makanai Cosmetics/D-fit Co., Ltd.

##### 14:45-15:55 Group Work

“Women Entrepreneurs Aiming to Solve Social Issues with Business”

##### 15:55-16:00 Review on Group Work

**Ms. Mari Hamada**, CEO, Nadeshiko Voice

##### 16:00-16:05 Closing Address

**Mr. Masateru Yoshida**, Director for International Affairs, Gender Equality Bureau, Cabinet Office

##### 16:40-17:30 Visit to Makanai Cosmetics



#### 4. Group Discussion Results

The exchange program was conducted among the participants of the symposium, to voice and swap their ideas and enhance their understanding of one another. In the beginning, three Japanese women entrepreneurs, who are striving to solve social issues with business, made presentations on their business experience in Japan and Asia-Pacific countries.



**Yuka Mitsuhashi**  
MO-HOUSE Ltd.  
Founder



**Elli Takagaki**  
Paper Miracles  
Founder/CEO



**Mayumi Tachikawa**  
Makanai Cosmetics/  
D-fit Co., Ltd.  
Founder/CEO

Following the presentation, the participants shared types of social issues that they are trying to solve through their businesses. Many of the participants were trying to address issues such as providing economic empowerment opportunities to socially disadvantaged people including women, people with disabilities, and the poor, creating employment opportunities, and trying to preserve traditional culture.

Then, the participants talked about problems that they face in solving the social issues while running their business. The following are some of the points raised.

Subject	Issues
Financial matters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Environmentally friendly products are costly.</li> </ul>
Culture and customs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Only a limited number of people consider healthy food and safe water as an important social issue to address.</li> <li>➤ Compared to business related to employment and income generation, preservation of traditional culture and arts is given lower priority as an important subject to support.</li> </ul>
Human resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ It is difficult to change the dependent mindset of target groups such as people with disabilities and the poor.</li> </ul>
Market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ It is difficult to find a market for organic and ethical products.</li> </ul>
Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ It is hard to maintain the quality of products and expand business.</li> <li>➤ It is hard to keep balance between social issues and sales.</li> <li>➤ It takes a long time to bring a positive outcome in both social issues and sales.</li> <li>➤ It is difficult to sustain business.</li> </ul>