

# LEAN IN Malaysia



Hi there Lean In Community,

I was 24 when I first joined the workforce upon completing my studies in the UK. I remember starting my career in the insurance industry, bearing high ambitions to someday becoming a corporate leader, only to be told by the society here that my string of academic achievements and career ambitions are still not enough, until I get married and have children. That's the expectation they had on me when I came back.

I was then left disheartened feeling rather not accomplished.

So I looked around for answers, to understand this dilemma that was happening to not just me, but most of my girlfriends too. Do we focus on career, climb the corporate ladder or do we start our own family?

I truly believe that there is no right answer to this question, as happiness and success are both subjective matters that are clearly defined by the individual him/herself. But no one should be told what to do and who to become, worse to be penalized for their choices in life.

4 years ago when Sarah Chen and I got together with the other Founding Members to establish Lean In Malaysia, my life changed positively. The people that I worked with and crossed paths throughout my involvement with Lean In Malaysia has impacted the way I look at life – it's more rosy - with bigger hopes, with bigger goals, a better future.

The experience gained through this platform has been nothing short of incredible, eye opening, mind boggling, thought provoking experience that changed me as a person, as a woman, as a daughter, as a sister, as a friend and as a colleague.

It was the pure joy of organizing events, curating programs, networking, stimulating dialogues with experts, formulating successful accelerators and developing a strong support system for all – all this, to make a change in the society and bring across a message to empower not just women, but men, to pursue their ambitions, both personally and professionally.

Last year we saw the launch of our Lean In Youth Programme that brought together both young men and women from local public universities to prepare them for the workforce and

enlightened them on issues such as work life balance, gender inequality, gender bias, pay gap, unconscious bias at work and sexual harassment so that these issues we're currently facing at workplaces could be addressed from bottom up.

We also worked closely with partners like LeadWomen to conduct Lean In Masterclasses, equipping our participants with soft skills taught by industry leaders to help navigate their careers – how to have the right conversations, highlighting the importance of networking and all the essential tools to move up the career ladder.

Lean In Career Programme 3.0 was another huge success for us. We witnessed the journey of around 22 participants under the mentorship of top industry leaders, breaking away from their limiting beliefs to take up that leadership positions at their workplaces. Three months of workshops, bi weekly networking sessions, personal mentioning sessions have altogether helped them to achieve their goal to become leaders in their respective careers.

We wanted the mix to matter, we wanted to level up the conversation, we wanted to make an impact.

All that was brought together at our year end flagship event - the Lean In UnConference (LIU2018) with esteemed speakers lined up to have stimulating dialogues with more than 200 guests on that day. The mix truly matter when a group of diverse individuals gathered on a Saturday to attend the UnConference at Lanai Kijang, Bank Negara Malaysia, to level up the conversation on how we can implement effective policies nationwide to bridge the gap on diversity and inclusion initiatives done at grassroots level to the board level, and through the fireside chat, our guests had the chance to have interactive conversations with speakers about anything at all.

2018 was an exciting journey for us, with both Aysha Shujat and Ashley Suelyn successfully leading the outgoing Lean In Malaysia team throughout the programmes that took place. We couldn't have also done it without the support from our sponsors and partners, and the entire Lean In Community who believe in the cause as much as we do since day 1.

So back to my personal experience, it's changed my life tremendously because you have given me hope to rise above my own limiting beliefs, assured that I am enough.

Let's march together, stronger than ever, into the new year, to level up the conversation, so that every man and woman not just in Malaysia, but across the world, is able to be the best version of themselves in this world, be it at work or at home.

Happy New Year, everyone. Wishing you a blessed 2019 ahead.

*With Love,*



**Ms Abir Abdul Rahim**

Co Founder / Director of Lean In Malaysia  
Regional Leader of Lean In Asia

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company? Contact our team at [partnerships@leaninmalaysia.com](mailto:partnerships@leaninmalaysia.com).

## Lean In Pakistan Summit



In 2016, we launched Lean In Asia together with Lean In China, Japan and Pakistan to enhance collaboration and learning exchange between regional circles. Back then, founders and members of these regional circles joined our annual summit for the launch.

This month, in continuation of our efforts to enhance regional exchange, our outgoing President, Aysha Shujaat, joined the annual summit of Lean In Pakistan in Lahore. She showcased Lean In Malaysia's journey and spoke about the importance of having women in leadership.

There was a meaningful exchange on how circles are creating awareness on women empowerment issues. Female leaders from companies like Nestle shared the practices in place to encourage female workforce participation. Some of these policies include extended maternity leave, flexible hours and work from home flexibility. Despite cultural barrier, these policies have proved to encourage women to stay in workforce.

It was also encouraging to see men leaning in together at the summit. A male panelist (Ali Qamar - Partner Advisory Services for EY Ford Rhodes), encouraged men to play an empowering role, "Men, having a stronger role in our culture should see the bigger picture and drive the change to ensure that our daughters inherit a more secure, gender balanced society."

We look forward more regional exchanges in the year 2019.

## A Word from: HE Andrew Goledzinowski, Australian High Commissioner



Congratulations Lean In Malaysia for an impactful unConference!

Despite the security challenges, you succeeded in hosting a highly successful unConference. You demonstrated the resilience at the heart of Lean In Malaysia. As I said on the day, resilience is probably the most important thing for achieving your goals. As female and male champions of change, you will have many obstacles while bringing about gender equality in Malaysia - as does Australia.

It was the absolute pleasure of the Australian High Commission to be the Champion Partner of the unConference. I was impressed by the quality of the event and speakers, and I enjoyed meeting so many of the young people involved in the organisation.



Your mission is our mission. Educating, enabling and empowering women is imperative for strong societies. Progress is being made in both Malaysia and Australia towards gender equality, but we need to accelerate this. Not only is it the right thing to do, but more women in the work force and in leadership positions can only benefit our countries.

The Australian High Commission is looking forward to further collaboration with Lean In Malaysia. For us, this was not only an event. I want to commit to the fact that the Australian High Commission wants to work with you going forward to ensure that we can make those changes real.

*Best wishes,*  
**Andrew Goledzinowski, Australian High Commissioner**

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## **Message from Sponsors: ASB**

### **Ladies Lunch hosted by Asia School of Business**

Learn the value of an MBA for women  
Hear our students' perspectives  
Network with other like-minded women

**January 26, Saturday**

12:00 PM until 2:00 PM | Damansara Heights, Kuala Lumpur



The Ladies Lunch is an annual by-invitation-only ASB event especially curated for professional females who are passionate about taking their career to the next level. Learn what an ASB MBA can do for you and network with other like-minded professional females, including ASB female students, alumnae and staff.

\*There is no fee to attend this event

[\*\*Ladies Lunch Registration\*\*](#)

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