

# FROM PASSION TO ACTION: ASIA 21 INNOVATING FOR THE FUTURE

ZHENJIANG, JIANGSU PROVINCE, CHINA • DECEMBER 6–8, 2013



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# AGENDA

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2013

6:00 PM

**OPENING RECEPTION**

6:45 PM

**OPENING DINNER**

**Welcoming Remarks**

**Tom Nagorski**

Executive Vice President  
Asia Society

**Keynote Remarks**

**Zhang Heqiang**

Director General  
Department of American and Oceanian Affairs  
Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries

**Zhang Guoyun**

Vice President  
Zhenjiang People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries

**Closing Remarks**

**Michael G. Kulma**

Executive Director  
Global Leadership Initiatives  
Asia Society



## AGENDA (continued)

9:00–10:30 AM

### SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2013

#### **THE LEADERS OF TOMORROW: DEVELOPING GLOBALLY COMPETENT LEADERS**

In an increasingly interdependent world, the dominant issues are less country-specific and more transnational in nature. Many of today's critical global challenges—environmental degradation, public health, sustainable development, global terrorism—can be addressed successfully by leaders who not only understand their own communities and issues, but also know how to work effectively across borders, cultures, and contexts. This new global landscape dictates how leaders think, interact, lead, and adapt to the new realities. Initial remarks will be followed by group discussion.

#### **DISCUSSION LEADERS:**

##### **Ejaj Ahmad**

Founder and President  
Bangladesh Youth Leadership Center (BYLC)

##### **Eric Wong**

Managing Director  
Blue Ridge Capital

##### **Sonam Tashi**

Chief Planning Officer  
Ministry of Economic Affairs  
Royal Government of Bhutan

10:30 AM–12:00 PM

#### **LESSONS IN LEADERSHIP**

Selected young leaders deliver succinct remarks on their own journey to leadership, share critical choices they made along the way, and explain the importance of public service and value-based leadership.





## AGENDA (continued)

12:00–1:00 PM

### DISCUSSION LEADERS:

#### **Donya Aziz**

Member, Executive Board of  
Parliamentarians for Global Action  
Former Member of Parliament, Pakistan

#### **Yin Myo Su**

Managing Director  
Inle Princess Resort

#### **Scot Frank**

Co-Founder and CEO  
One Earth Designs

2:00–3:30 PM

### SPOTLIGHT CONVERSATION

#### **Audry Hong Li**

Senior Partner  
Zhong Lun Law Firm

### LOCAL PERSPECTIVES ON LEADERSHIP:

#### **A CONVERSATION WITH ZHENJIANG'S YOUNG LEADERS**

Interactive session with local youth leaders from Zhenjiang, a third-tier Chinese city, on what leadership means to them, how they are addressing the most critical challenges confronting their generation/their city, and their vision for the future of Zhenjiang and China.

#### **Dai Yuanshun**

Chairman of the Board &  
General Manager  
Jiangsu Zhongyun Technology  
Limited Company

#### **Wang Maohe**

General Manager  
Jiangsu Dagang Limited Company

#### **Xu Fang**

Founder & Chairman of the Board  
Verdon Holding Group

#### **Chen Wenjuan**

Secretary  
Jiangsu University  
Committee of Communist  
Youth League of China

#### **Xu Yiming**

Head  
Youth League of *Jinshan*  
website



## AGENDA (continued)

3:30–4:00 PM

### ASIA SOCIETY-BANK OF AMERICA MERRILL LYNCH ASIA 21 PUBLIC SERVICE AWARD

#### PRESENTERS:

**Scot Frank**  
Co-founder and CEO  
One Earth Design

**Tania Simone May Yin Hyde**  
Director  
Taylor Street Advisory

4:00–4:30 PM

### GALVANIZING FOR A CAUSE: ASIA 21 RESPONSE TO SUPER TYPHOON HAIYAN

## SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2013

9:00–10:30 AM

### ASIA 21 2.0: TURNING PASSION INTO ACTION

After eight years, with close to a thousand members in the network, and a wide-ranging brain trust amongst them, the Asia 21 community's potential to solve the Asia-Pacific region's most pressing societal challenges is tremendous. In the past three years, the Asia 21 brand has successfully branched out, resulting in the establishment of two very successful sub-initiatives—Afghan Young Leaders and India-Pakistan Regional Young Leaders—which are facilitating country/issue-specific work at a much deeper level.

- How can the Asia 21 movement harness the power of collaboration in more efficient ways?
- What will spark many more Asia 21 Young Leaders to transform the connections they have established over the course of the last eight years into sustained leadership in action?
- Recognizing Asia 21's strengths and limitations, what is the vision for Asia 21 2.0?





## AGENDA (continued)

10:30 AM–12:00 PM

### DISCUSSION LEADERS:

**Sulaiman Akbari**

Business Development Manager  
Mercy Corps

**Satchit Balsari**

Emergency Physician  
New York-Presbyterian Hospital  
Assistant Professor  
Weill Cornell Medical College

12:00–2:00 PM

### IDEAS FESTIVAL:

#### LOOKING FOR GROUNDBREAKING IDEAS THAT WORK

Participants who responded to the “Call for Ideas” ahead of the Summit get 2 mins. each to pitch their ideas to the larger audience. At the end of the session, 3-5 ideas that exhibit potential to turn into actual projects or serve as “idea hubs” for larger numbers of young leaders from the Asia 21 network as well as from the region to become engaged in will get chosen for further action. Participants sign up for one of the chosen projects and meet in small groups in the next session to develop a plan of action for going forward.

2:00–2:30 PM

#### STRATEGY SESSION: CHANNELING INDIVIDUAL ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRITS FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION

The four Ideas teams discuss and finalize the processes and timelines for moving their projects forward. Each team will then present their work plan – goals, objectives, activities, deliverables.  
*(Lunch served in the meeting rooms.)*

2:30 PM

#### REPORT BACK

Ideas teams reconvene for presentation.

#### CLOSING REMARKS

Michael G. Kulma  
Executive Director, Global Leadership Initiatives  
Asia Society

# FRIDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2013

## KEYNOTE REMARKS:

Zhang Heqiang, Director General, Department of American and Oceanian Affairs,  
Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries

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Distinguished Guests,

Good evening. I am honored to attend the opening ceremony of the Asia 21 Young Leader Summit this year in the prosperous city of Zhenjiang. On behalf of the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (AFFC), I would like to welcome all guests and extend my gratitude to the co-organizers of this event, the Zhenjiang Municipal People's Government.

AFFC regularly organizes diplomatic exchanges between youths from different countries. In recent years we have conducted many exchanges, including exchanges between China and New Zealand, and between China, Korea, and Japan. Youth exchange programs are an important part of our work. Our hope in the future lies in our youth, and we hope to aid the young people in their growth.

We hope to develop greater channels for young people to participate in different platforms for exchanges. We hope to enhance their understanding of the world, create cross-cultural friendships and opportunities for collaboration, and help the young people to develop a sense of social responsibility to society.

The young people play an important role in facilitating the process of industrialization and globalization of the Asia Pacific region. It is our sincere hope this forum for the young people will develop great networks and new ideas, create insightful views for the Asian Pacific region, and inspire future leaders in the region.

In this forum, representatives will discuss ideas of innovation, facilitate dialogue between local and international young people, conduct investigations, and visit the great places in Zhenjiang. I wish this forum great success. Thank you.

Zhang Guoyun, Vice President,  
Zhenjiang People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries

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Dear Young Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good evening. Today young leaders from the Asia Pacific region gather in Zhenjiang for the Asia 21 Young Leaders Summit. It is a dialogue across national borders and across different sectors. First of all,





on behalf of the People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, I would like to extend my sincere welcome to all of you.

I would like to take this opportunity to make a brief introduction about our city, Zhenjiang. Zhenjiang is located in the Yangtze River Delta, one of the most developed regions in China. It carries a rich history of over 3000 years. Since ancient times, Zhenjiang has been an important port open to foreign trade. At present, Zhenjiang has established trade relationships with over 100 countries and regions in the world, and international sister city ties with 15 cities in 10 countries.

People describe Zhenjiang through four perspectives.

First, the city is located at a confluence between the Zhenjiang River and the Grand Canal, which forms a waterway that serves as a transportation hub for national waterways and highways. The river shoreline is as long as 2700 kilometers, accounting for one third of the total shoreline of the province.

Second, Zhenjiang is a place where the ancient Chu culture meets with the Wu culture. The city witnessed the birth of many great masterpieces of literature in ancient times. There are five higher education institutions in the city, with over 80,000 students enrolled. Zhenjiang is a national pilot city of innovation; the output of high-tech industries accounts for 45% of 500 industries in the city, ranking second in the province.

Third, Zhenjiang is a city with both hill and river sceneries. With the water and hill resources, Zhenjiang was named a national ecological city of China in 2012.

Fourth, two economic circles overlap in Zhenjiang—the Shanghai economic circle in the east and the Nanjing metropolitan circle in the west. Zhenjiang has experienced rapid social and economic development in recent years.

Today, Zhenjiang aims to build itself into a city of innovation, culture, ecology, and harmonious society. There are many development opportunities facing us. The southern cities of Jiangsu Province will become a demonstration area of China's organization. The development of Zhenjiang, Nanjing, and Liangzhou are becoming more and more integrated. These opportunities will take Zhenjiang's developments up to a higher level.

Zhenjiang's development provides young people with a broader stage to make things happen. During recent years, Zhenjiang has organized many programs that focus on the young people, including programs on college education, employment, entrepreneurship, environmental protection, poverty elimination, and so on. These programs have effectively promoted Zhenjiang's social and economic developments.

As this is an occasion of the Asia 21 Young Leaders Summit, I will take this opportunity to share my thoughts on the youth.

First, it is important to respect the ideas of the young people. The development of the young people concerns the whole society and the whole world. It is a systematic process that involves various parties. I think the key to their development lies in our respect for their ideas.

At the moment, our society is changing from post-figurative cultures to co-figurative cultures or even pre-figurative cultures. In very stable, unchanging cultures, youth learn from their parents and grandparents how to learn as adults. These are post-figurative cultures. However, in co-figurative cultures,



society exists in a state of change. Both youth and adults learn from their peers. And in pre-figurative cultures, society is subjected to rapid change. Adults learn from their children. It is the youth who have the capability to cope with rapid change. With the society changing fast, it is necessary to respect the ideas of the youth and help them participate in social life and develop their careers.

According to a survey by the Zhenjiang Youth Federation, 70% of the young deem that the success of personal development lies within themselves. In recent years, Zhenjiang Youth Federation has been focusing on the young people's needs by respecting their thoughts and communicating with them in a way that they are familiar with.

Second, to promote the development of the youth, it is important to find ways to realize their engagement in the economy. Effective economic participation is important for the development of the young people. Their employment is not only important for their lives and careers, but it is also important for their social development. Youth employment has become one of the most important issues that need to be dealt with.

Over the past few years, Zhenjiang Youth Federation has established many programs to promote youth employment. For example, the federation has found effective ways for young people to apply for jobs or start their own businesses. The federation has organized the young to receive technical training by micro-financing young people to start their business, and international programs to help the young people with their new startups. These programs have effectively helped the youths' participation in the economy.

Young people have the capability to cope with rapid change and are creative. The federation has also nurtured the youths' creativity and encouraged them to take on creative jobs.

Third, it is important to protect the rights and benefits of young people, which is a premise for their development in society. At present, young people are becoming more and more aware of their rights and benefits, which are mostly related to their integration into society, such as social participation and job development.

During recent years, the Zhenjiang Youth Federation has dealt with urgent needs of the young people and has encouraged society to build a favorable environment for their development.

The federation also cooperates with the Municipal People's Congress and Zhenjiang People's Political Consulting Conference. They listen to the young people's opinions and reflect their opinions to the congress deputy and congress members, who then write issues concerning young people's rights into proposals. By doing so, the protection of young people's rights is timely dealt with at a high level.

Dear young friends, Zhenjiang is an ancient city with a long history. It is also a young vibrant city. Zhenjiang's development in the future relies on the young people. The Asia 21 Young Leaders Summit gives local young people an opportunity to communicate with their peers in the Asia Pacific region. With a broader horizon, I believe, young people will be more passionate about making the world a better place.

I wish the Asia 21 Young Leaders Summit great success.

# SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2013

## LEADERS OF TOMORROW: DEVELOPING GLOBALLY COMPETENT LEADERS

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The opening session was meant to elicit responses to how an increasingly interdependent world has direct implications for the ways leaders think, interact, and lead in the rapidly changing global reality. It has now become imperative for leaders of today to be able to work effectively across borders, cultures, and contexts, as well as having a clear understanding of their own communities and issues. While the characteristics and skill sets that served well in the past have not entirely become obsolete, the leaders of tomorrow will have to acquire additional competencies to prepare for the 21st century, as the global landscape has changed drastically, and so have the priorities.

Against this backdrop, the session got underway with the participants responding to the question posed by the discussion leader regarding their views about the role of a leader in the current global context. The participants argued about the merits and demerits of leadership exercised with and without formal authority. With a formal authoritative figure, it is easier to command the group's attention; however, such a rigid style of leadership will have severe limitations. The participants acknowledged that leadership also involves disappointing certain segments of the society, as there are times when leaders have to make difficult decisions that not all parties involved will perceive favorably. Competent leaders, however, are not concerned about pleasing all; their main objective is to help the team take stock of its strengths and weaknesses and inspire them to reach their individual and collective potential.

Some of the participants pointed out that in many Asian countries it is quite common for leaders, particularly political leaders, to tell people what they want to hear instead of sharing their own visions. The participants roundly critiqued the potential of this kind of populist approach to leadership, since it will fail to instigate social change, especially in the context of transforming passion into action. Competent leaders also understand the importance of inspiring others, since this encourages people to take on responsibilities without having to be told to do so. Competent leaders are also guided by an internal, value-based compass, which helps them assess their decisions and direct their actions towards the long-term benefit of the team on a consistent basis.



Eric Wong, Managing Director, Blue Ridge Capital (USA) leading the Leaders of Tomorrow: Developing Globally Competent Leaders session





## LESSONS IN LEADERSHIP

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Given that Asia 21 young leaders represent diverse cultures, belong to different geographic regions, and possess disparate expertise, their unique leadership stories are oftentimes compelling and inspirational, and at times heartrending. Again and again, the participants and everyone else in the room were amazed by the young leaders' stories how they have persevered, fought against all odds, and taken the road less traveled, but in the end come out on top with their sheer determination, ingenuity, and a little bit of luck.

Here are four samples of leadership stories and critical choices that have proven instrumental in guiding the leadership journeys of three participants:

One participant shared his experience working in the rural part of the Himalayas, where climate change had seriously impacted the natural environment. According to an ancient tale from the region, "When the mountains turn from white, to gray, to black, that's when the world is coming to an end." While many foreigners have visited these regions as tourists and promised to return with solutions for local problems they encountered during their trips, not many of them actually keep their word. Realizing that it is always easier to point out problems than to offer practical solutions, this delegate decided to commit to the environmental improvement in the region by creating a cooker that uses solar energy, instead of the traditional way of using firewood for fuel. His ongoing work continues to promote the belief in locally developed solutions with global applications.

The next participant shared her story about her involvement in the rescue efforts for a devastating earthquake in Pakistan that resulted in the deaths of close to 75,000 people. She was a member of Parliament at the time, but she had no prior experience in disaster management and was not at all



Donya Aziz, Member, Executive Board of Parliamentarians for Global Action (Pakistan)

prepared for the immense task at hand. However, realizing the need of the hour, she steered ahead and gathered the necessary staff, doctors, and resources and set up a rescue center in the disaster zone. Within 3 weeks, the team that she put together performed 1,500 surgeries, treated 8,000 patients, and delivered many babies. From this experience, the participant learned that "You do not always know what you are doing, but things will fall in place, and you will find the people to do it." She talked about the importance of having the right team and the will to uphold what you believe in. No one person possesses all the necessary leadership

skills, but what is more important for a leader is to realize that the whole is larger than the sum of its parts. If you have the resourcefulness to identify the right people for the right job and the tenacity to go that extra mile in assembling the team, half the battle is already won.

Another participant shared his experience growing up as a new immigrant in America. Moving from the then Soviet Union with little money, he had to help his family out by working at odd jobs while going to school. After the initial years of struggle, at the age of 19, he started his first business with a friend who was much older than himself. When the business had finally started to pan out, he was confronted with a crushing reality—his business partner was diagnosed with AIDS and succumbed to it shortly thereafter. The participant was personally and professionally devastated, and soon the company

folded and with it the participant's dream. From this experience, what he learned is that while we reach for the stars, we must never lose sight of the importance of building a strong team, which will serve as a safeguard against the unexpected.

Another leadership journey that resonated well with the participants was shared by a participant who took the challenge of doing something totally outside of the realm of his expertise. Even though he had no background in the music business, he took the initiative to bring LMT Connection, a Canadian band, to China, and successfully organized 11 shows in 10 days in six different cities. For over three decades, LMT Connection had been trying to bring their music to China, but these attempts had failed because of financial issues and business deals. The participant recounted that he was able to change all that due to his sheer passion, a passion to introduce this incredible band from his native Canada to a new audience in China. The main takeaway from this experience is that with passion, you can take a leap into an industry you have very little knowledge about, as long as you have the will to succeed.



Armen Orujyan, Founder and Chairman, Athgo Corporation (USA)

## LOCAL PERSPECTIVES ON LEADERSHIP: A CONVERSATION WITH ZHENJIANG'S YOUNG LEADERS



Local Zhenjiang Young Leaders

Led by five young leaders of Zhenjiang, a third-tier city in China, the panel discussion explored the meaning of youth leadership in the local context, how the young leaders are addressing the most critical challenges confronting their generation and their city, and their vision for the future of Zhenjiang and China.

The Zhenjiang young leaders highlighted several positive cases of Zhenjiang's public programs to encourage youth in leadership activities. The young people of Zhenjiang have responded to these grassroots and governmental activities with keen interest and active participation. In addition, Zhenjiang provides fertile ground for young entrepreneurs who wish to start up their own businesses. The local policies encourage young leadership and provide attractive conditions for the young to actualize their vision.

The Zhenjiang young leaders highlighted several positive cases of Zhenjiang's public programs to encourage youth in leadership

Chen Wenjuan is a professor at Jiangsu College, where 42,000 students are enrolled. Her students are characterized by their great sense of historical responsibility. When the government initiated a program that called for students to assist with the development of China's western regions, 800 students participated and greatly enhanced the educational programs there. The student body also expressed much enthusiasm in the rescue efforts for Sichuan in 2008. Over 2,000 medical students spent one month of service at the disaster site, and many participated in a donor program for Sichuan's orphaned children.

Xu Yuming is a media reporter and regular blogger. He spoke of a series of successful fundraising programs for leukemia in Zhenjiang. In one instance, promoters stationed in the city centers rallied people to donate their day's earnings for an urgently needy patient and succeeded in fundraising 700,000 RMB for her surgery.

Xu Fang is the owner of a custom furniture company. Growing up in a peasant family, Xu dreamed of providing his parents with better living conditions. He shared his life journey from factory worker to successful businessman. His company today has an affiliated foundation through which the company reaches out to orphans, senior citizens, and other underprivileged populations.

Dai Yuanshan is a professor and owner of a cloud computing company. After graduating from Tsinghua University, he continued his studies in Singapore and later in the U.S. Despite receiving a tenureship in an American college, he returned to China to set up a data analysis business in Zhenjiang. His business currently has a team of 100 researchers and frequently assists with government programs. According to Dai, cloud computing has tremendous social benefits, as it can potentially equip children in remote areas with better education plans and provide people with more convenient medical help.

During the Q&A session, the participants asked the local young leaders about ways they voice their concerns and the challenges facing their generation in a third-tier city such as Zhenjiang. Not surprisingly, the panelists pointed out that the youth in Zhenjiang, like their counterparts in other parts of the world, resort to the web as a place for self-expression. While social media is a convenient platform for public expression, it is almost too convenient, according to one Zhenjiang leader. The anonymity of digital media enables people to make statements without thoughtful consideration. Moreover, it is difficult to decipher true information from false stories online. As in other parts of the world, the internet has both positive and negative impact on public communication in Zhenjiang.

In this session, the young leaders of Zhenjiang provided positive perspectives on local efforts to support the growth of youth leadership. They emphasized the importance of public support of the youth and highlighted successful cases of social mobilization and young entrepreneurship.

## SPOTLIGHT CONVERSATION

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China's incredible legal and economic transformation over the last 30 years is a remarkable success story. Initially there were few laws for foreign investment, and China's first venture law was enacted in 1989. Then in 1992, former leader Deng Xiaoping made his famous Shenzhen speech. By the time China joined WTO in 2001, the country had opened many more business sectors for foreign investors, which spawned tremendous business and legal opportunities. Between 2003 and 2010, China passed many laws to provide legal support to business transactions. These included the first acquisition law in 2003, the first bankruptcy law in 2006, the first antitrust law in 2007, and updates to merger and acquisition laws in 2010.



LEFT TO RIGHT: Michael G. Kulma, Executive Director of Global Leadership Initiative, Asia Society (USA) and Audry Hong Li, Senior Partner, Zhong Lun Law Firm (P.R.C.)



The steady increase of foreign investment and transactions required urgent growth in the legal sector, and many legal firms were established at that time. In the globalized economy, as increasing numbers of foreign investors are coming to China, more local companies are also venturing out to invest overseas.

As China has come to its next stage of economic reform, there are major challenges and opportunities ahead. The government is now more attentive to investments that concern new technology, energy saving, and environmental friendliness. As China is no longer a manufacturing-focused economy, and with the new tax law enacted in 2008, foreign investors are becoming more interested in competing in China as domestic companies. In the newly opened pilot free-trade zone in Shanghai, foreign investment opportunities are offered without complicated government examination. Also, since 2011, the RMB currency has been undergoing internationalization. Foreign and domestic companies can now register their capital in RMB for investments in China and overseas.

## ASIA SOCIETY-BANK OF AMERICA MERRILL LYNCH ASIA 21 PUBLIC SERVICE AWARD



Each year, the incoming class of Asia 21 young leaders oversees the annual selection process for the winner of the Asia Society-Bank of America Merrill Lynch Asia 21 Public Service Award. This is among the primary responsibilities of their year. The award annually recognizes an organization that benefits social and economic groups, communities, and the public in the Asia Pacific region. The selection is based on project innovation and feasibility, quantifiable impact, sustainability, and growth potential.

The Award consists of prize money of \$10,000, generously donated by Asia 21's founding international sponsor, Bank of America Merrill Lynch. In addition, over the course of the year, the young leaders work together and offer the selected public service organization access to the Asia 21 network and their diverse areas of expertise.

In recognition of their outstanding work in providing Pakistan's underprivileged population with affordable healthcare and regular medical support, **Naya Jeevan** was awarded the 2013 Asia Society-Bank of America Merrill Lynch Asia 21 Public Service Award. Zahra Shah, Head of Member Services of Naya Jeevan, accepted the award during the ceremonies at the Asia 21 Young Leaders Summit in Zhenjiang, China.

Past winners include Embrace, 2012 (Health of Children); Roots of Health, 2011 (Health of Women, The Philippines); HOME Singapore, 2010 (Migration Economics); Prisoners Assistance Nepal, 2009; Mashhad Positive Club, 2008 (HIV/AIDS, Iran); Odanadi seva Samsthe, 2007 (Trafficking, India); and the Chi Heng Foundation, 2006 (HIV/AIDS, Hong Kong).

## **GALVANIZING FOR A CAUSE: ASIA 21 RESPONSE TO SUPER TYPHOON HAIYAN**

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In this session, the young leaders from the Philippines reported on the progress of national disaster relief efforts in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan. Over the last five years, the Philippines has experienced a consistent increase in the number and impact of typhoons. While there are speculations that climate change may be a cause of this trend, the local young leaders have been seeking ways to help build a sustainable defense system against natural disasters in the Philippines. Such a system would not only apply to the Philippines but also help other coastal regions that are regularly affected by typhoons.

The post-Haiyan situation has attracted massive local and international support of NGOs, governmental organizations, and individuals from over 40 countries to assist in the relief efforts. The areas of need include the rebuilding of basic public services, education, school buildings, and shelter, as well as a critical review of city planning and its sustainability against natural disasters. The young leaders sourced contacts already involved with the rebuilding of communities and sought out ways to contribute to their already ongoing efforts.



Jo-Ar Acosta Herrera, Commandant, Civil-Military Perations School Armed Force of the Philippines, reporting on the Philippines disaster relief effort in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan (Philippines)

Four Asia 21 young leaders from the Philippines gave an update about how the Asia 21 network has been involved in the disaster relief efforts, and led a brainstorming session on ways the Asia 21 network can bring its expansive expertise to bear on the ongoing relief efforts. Several proposals were put forth for consideration, including focused donations, engagement with climate change assessment committees, and a compilation of group skills for crisis relief.

## **SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2013**

### **ASIA 21 2.0: TURNING PASSION INTO ACTION**

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After eight years, with close to a thousand members in the network, the Asia 21 community's potential to solve the Asia Pacific region's most pressing societal challenges is tremendous. While the *Asia 21 Process* has been quite successful in convening and connecting these amazing individuals who are passionate about effecting social change, there is now a general agreement that the network can achieve much more by transforming passion into action. In this session, the young leaders candidly evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of the present Asia 21 model, and the potential of the community to harness the power of collaboration in more efficient ways.

To begin with, representatives from two of Asia 21's recent sub-initiatives—the Afghanistan Young Leaders Initiative and the India-Pakistan Regional Young Leaders Initiative—briefly reported on their

local activities and shared how they are creating greater impact in their local communities. The representatives of the Afghan young leaders stressed the importance of building communication channels with the government bodies and policy makers in order to include the perspective of the youth in the policy making process. They talked about the Afghanistan Young Leaders Initiative's efforts in highlighting the priorities and challenges facing the youths in Afghanistan—68% of the country's population is under the age of 25—at the major international summits on Afghanistan.



Mohammed Suleiman Akbari, Business Development Manager, Mercy Corps (Afghanistan)

Similarly, the representatives of the India-Pakistan Regional Young Leaders Initiative spoke about the imperative of changing the narrative of India-Pakistan relations and how they are setting out to do so. The Class of 2013-14 India-Pakistan Young Leaders is designing a series of public service announcements that will highlight “the cost of inaction” between India and Pakistan and its wide-ranging implications for not only Indo-Pakistan relations but the entire South Asian region. A brief demo of the public service announcement video from Pakistan was shown to update the participants on the nature of the project.



LEFT TO RIGHT: Humaira Bachal, Founder & President, DREAM Foundation Trust and Mehmal Sarfraz, Regional Deputy Secretary General, South Asian Free Media Association (Pakistan)

Another example of the *Asia 21 in action* motto pertained to a close collaboration between two Asia 21 young leaders from Pakistan. A short video showcasing the work of one of the leaders was screened; the second young leader—a filmmaker—was the one who captured the tremendous work of the first in the video. The young leader whose work was featured in the video spoke about her personal and professional growth since she came to the Asia 21 network in 2012, and she credited the Asia 21 network for her growth.

Following the brief reports on the sub-initiatives, the participants explored ways to effectively advance the content of the Summit in order to optimize their time together and take the connections to the next level. Some of the participants who have been in the network from the inception of the Initiative in 2006 recommended that more thematic programming and action-based activities be included into the agenda in the upcoming annual summits.

Overall, the young leaders expressed their great appreciation for the opportunity to forge connections, expand their networks, and incubate new ideas with like-minded people to address their shared challenges. While informal meetings between small groups of leaders have sprouted outside of the Summit, there was a general feeling that the output of this immensely critical network will increase greatly if we can harness the energy and passion in a more coordinated fashion.



## IDEAS FESTIVAL: LOOKING FOR GROUNDBREAKING IDEAS THAT WORK

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With an objective to activate the entire Asia 21 Network in a more coordinated, efficient, and practical manner, this session served as a platform for participants to pitch their groundbreaking ideas to the larger network and solicit participation from their fellow young leaders.

The session set the stage for young leaders—those who had responded to the Call for Ideas ahead of time as well as others who were inspired to contribute after hearing those ideas—were given 2 minutes



each to pitch their ideas. Given the diversity of expertise that exists among the Asia 21 young leaders, the project proposals spanned the fields of medical care, disaster relief, interfaith forums, to cultural exhibitions, to name a few. The proposals generally called for innovative solutions to the common challenges facing the Asia Pacific region and the contributions that the Asia 21 network could make to address them.

At the end of the session, the participants choose four ideas that they felt would be most useful and would have a realistic possibility of turning into actual projects. Depending on their expertise and interest, each participant then signed up for one project, with the understanding that they will collectively bring the idea into an actual project within a year's time. The final four projects chosen are:

**Asia 21 and ASEAN Young Leaders Partnership.** In partnership with ASEAN, Asia 21 young leaders assemble a reference group that provides technical analysis and advice for key issues to be included in the ASEAN conference agenda.

**#Asia21Voices.** A monthly, TED-like broadcast that invites different Asia 21 young leaders to speak on their projects, which will then be shared with the rest of the network.

**Innovation Forum.** A workshop for young Chinese entrepreneurs, led by Asia 21 young leaders.

**Interfaith Forum.** For communities that include multiple religious practices, the interfaith forum gathers members of different religions to conceive faith-specific solutions to community problems.

## STRATEGY SESSION: CHANNELING INDIVIDUAL ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRITS FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION

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During this session, the four project groups discussed their ideas further and finalized work plans for moving their projects forward. At the conclusion of the session, lead coordinator(s) from each team presented their goals, activities, and deliverables in a plenary session. Their preliminary plans are outlined below, and the lead coordinators are now responsible to follow up with their groups online or via conference calls to work out further details and outline next steps, detailed timelines, and responsibilities.

## ASIA 21 YOUNG LEADERS AND ASEAN PARTNERSHIP

To leverage the collective expertise of Asia 21 young leaders, an ASEAN young leaders resource team, consisting of suitable Asia 21 representatives, will be assembled to provide ASEAN stakeholders with policy and technical analysis and advice in areas such as economics, good governance, private sector development, and environmental protection. From the beginning of 2014, Asia 21 team members will execute a series of key networking plans in preparation for the attendance of Asia 21 members in the upcoming ASEAN Summit in Myanmar. The aim of the project is to establish a long-term and formal partnership between Asia 21 and ASEAN, and to advance Asia 21's potential to bring greater positive change for the future of Asia.

## INNOVATION FORUM

The Innovation Forum is a three-day engagement in April/May 2015 about youth innovation and entrepreneurship in China. It will bring together up to 100 young adults to team up with other like-minded peers with the primary objectives to:

- Build and employ core startup business development skills,
- Provide directions on how to start, build, and manage a startup, and
- Facilitate team building and collective creation of approximately 20 new commercially viable enterprise concepts that display financial sustainability, eco-efficiency, and measurable positive communal impact.

The Forum is intended to inspire individual creativity and collective action with lasting, wide-ranging economic impact, particularly in the areas of knowledge technologies, constructive business formation, job creation, and network expansion. The overall experience should serve as a catalyst for inciting and sprouting entrepreneurial activities locally and regionally.

## #ASIA21VOICES

#Asia21Voices is a collaborative project that aims to build the Asia 21 brand through a YouTube channel and program that will highlight the stories and advocacies of Asia 21 leaders. It will serve as a platform for Asia 21 leaders to share their work with fellow leaders, in effect facilitating possible collaboration and networking with others who may be interested in assisting in the various projects. As a public channel, it can also highlight stories of Asia 21 leaders and drum up interest with interested institutions or individuals outside the Asia 21 network.

## INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

The *Asia 21 Network's* strength comes not only from the diversity of expertise, sectors, and geography, but also from the plurality of faith and religious beliefs that the 800-strong young leaders subscribe to. By promoting robust interfaith conversations at the Summit, the project seeks to break down prejudices, foster mutually inspiring relationships, and create appreciative knowledge of diverse religious and nonreligious traditions.

This session successfully brought the Asia 21 Young Leaders Summit 2013 to a positive close. Within the 2-hour workshop, the young leaders drew up preliminary plans to realize their project ideas, effectively demonstrating the Summit's theme of the year by turning "passion into action." The projects, as offshoots of the Summit, would advance the potential of the Asia 21 community in creating greater social impact in the Asia Pacific region and demonstrate the Initiative's potential to effect change in far-reaching ways.

## CONCLUSION

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The meaning of the phrase the *proof of the pudding is in the eating* becomes more evident when one has had a chance to attend the Asia Society's Asia 21 Young Leaders Summit. This is a common sentiment expressed by both the first time as well as returning participants. The recently concluded Summit, which took place in Zhenjiang, China, in December 2013 was no exception. From the organizer's point of view, seeing some of Asia-Pacific's best and the brightest minds come together, discuss ways to address the region's critical challenges, and strengthen an already robust network of passionate and conscientious individuals, was tremendously rewarding. That is why we were not at all surprised to find the overall theme of the Summit ***Turning Passion into Action*** resonating so well. Typically, the Asia 21 Young Leaders are not only committed to bring forth the change they wish to see in the world, but also eager to do so by joining hands with like-minded individuals. The Asia Society's role in this process has been to identify, nurture, and develop further the types of globally competent leaders who not only understand their own communities and their local issues, but also know how to work effectively across borders in the Asia-Pacific region. The Asia 21 Young Leaders Initiative is that catalytic platform where such individual excellence is encouraged to find ways to have that greater impact. Over the course of



the past eight years, the experience working with close to 1,000 young leaders has led us to believe the Asia 21 Young Leaders are now poised to scale up the impact of their collective actions in a major way. We are certain that their collaborations will yield immeasurable dividends on the local, national, regional, and global levels. The Asia Society is a willing partner in this journey and will continue to play its part!