

Asia 21 in 2020: Catalyzing Change, Sustaining Impact

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Class Profiles



Ejaj Ahmad is the Founder and President of the Bangladesh Youth Leadership Center (BYLC), which aims to foster a more tolerant, inclusive and just society by training the next generation of leaders in Bangladesh. BYLC's international award winning leadership program unites youth from diverse educational and socio-economic backgrounds, equips them with leadership skills, and engages them in service-oriented projects in local communities to address Bangladesh's most urgent developmental needs. Ejaj is actively engaged with several youth-run initiatives in Bangladesh and serves on the board of a secondary girls' high school. He speaks on leadership to diverse audiences, including, in recent years, Geneva, Nairobi, San Francisco, Washington, D.C., New Delhi and Kuala Lumpur. He is a graduate of St. Andrews University and Harvard Kennedy School.



Undraa Agvaanluvsan is advisor to the Mongolian Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources, working on policy issues of non-conventional energy resources such as oil shale and methane gas resources. She had previously worked as a visiting professor at Stanford University, conducting research on uranium resource development, nuclear energy policy, and smart-grid. Following her successful academic career, Dr. Undraa has worked in several posts in Mongolian government, including appointment to the scientific secretary of the Institute of Strategic Studies at the National Security Council of Mongolia, advisor to Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, as well as an appointment as Ambassador-at-large on nuclear energy issues. In addition, in 2007, Dr. Undraa co-founded a research think-tank, the MonAme Research Center, on energy and environmental issues. She started the Mongolian Young Leader Program to connect Mongolian students studying abroad and help them to return to their homeland. She was selected as an Asia 21 Young Leader in 2011. She graduated from the National University of Mongolia with Bachelors and Masters degrees in Physics, followed by a diploma study at the International Centre for Theoretical Physics in Italy. In 2002, she obtained a PhD in physics at North Carolina State University, USA. Following her doctorate she conducted research in nuclear sciences at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory for several years.



Lesley Jeanne Yu Cordero is an Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs at the Presidential Communications Operations Office in Manila. She also serves as the Vice-Chairperson of the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board Appeals Committee. Prior to this, Lesley served as a Commissioner of the National Youth Commission and worked as a legal specialist for USAID Energy and Clean Air Project in the Philippines. She was also a technical specialist of Castalia Strategic Advisors in the AUSAID-Philippine Economic Reform and Governance Project on Government Infrastructure Projects for Public Private Partnerships. In addition, she worked as a political communications director in China, liaising with members of the press and the diplomatic community. In 2007, Lesley was the youngest election lawyer to head the legal team of Senate Majority Leader Miguel Zubiri, and served as spokesperson for the Senator's environmental agenda. She has also worked as a legislative officer in the Office of Majority Leader Senator Francis Pangilinan. Lesley has been recognized as a young political leader, and holds a Bachelor of Philosophy from the University of San Carlos and a Juris Doctor of Laws from the Ateneo de Manila University School of Law.



Dee Lee is Director of the Inno Community Development Organization which focuses on public health, poverty alleviation and emerging issues. The organization currently manages nine ongoing projects that include the workers' hotline, fair-trade online, HBV advocacy campaign. Together with sixteen colleagues spread across three offices in China, Dee is working with thirteen international foundations and brands to provide assistance to more than two million beneficiaries, most of whom are migrant workers in China. Dee started his Labour NGO career in 2007 with the first systematic workers' hotline in China. He has a Master's Degree in marketing communication and five years of work experience at a marketing research and PR firm.



Sapna Desai is a public health specialist who focuses on women's health and implementation of health programs. Her career combines extensive grassroots experience with rigorous academic training, with a focus on linking action and evidence. She is currently completing a PhD at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. From 2005-2012, she directed a range of health programs for SEWA, India's largest organisation of women workers. Sapna scaled-up a community health program to six states, working in the country's poorest areas, led a study on women's health and health insurance, and trained community health workers. Her health research intersects with women's rights, economic empowerment and livelihoods. Sapna is on the Editorial Board of Reproductive Health Matters, a global women's health journal, and on the board of UMA, an organisation of women migrant workers. She holds a BA in International Relations from Brown University and MS in Public Health from Harvard University.



Adnan Malik is a filmmaker and TV host based in Karachi. He is currently directing a variety of TV commercials and music videos and he has just completed hosting a travel show on a sixty-year friendship between China and Pakistan. He is also the Video Producer of Coke Studio, a fusion music platform that bridges barriers, celebrates diversity, and encourages unity. Adnan directed the multi-award winning film “Bijli” as well as “The Forgotten Song,” Pakistan’s first documentary on the demise of cinema culture. Adnan also contributed to the Sundance winning “Why We Fight, A Jihad for Love” and the indie film “Slackistan.” In addition, Adnan is an organizing member of the Karachi Film Festival and founder of ‘Turn the Tide’, a collective of young professionals that raised \$150,000 from around the world for environmental emergencies in Pakistan. He was also featured in the Asia Society’s 2010 report, Making a Difference through the Arts. Adnan was educated at Vassar College.



Gokilavani Muthusamy is Vice President and Head of Diversity and Inclusion, Asia Pacific, at Bank of America Merrill Lynch. Based in Hong Kong, she is responsible for proactively evaluating the Bank’s diversity and inclusion needs and driving the strategy and execution of critical diversity and inclusion projects across 12 countries across the Asia Pacific platform. Prior to joining the Bank, Goki worked in a non-profit organization focusing on youth and development, where she successfully completed projects in Botswana and Indonesia. Goki has also been involved in several civil society forums across Asia and Europe advocating the importance of cultural diversity and pluralism. Goki was trained in CCIWS, an organization established by and based in UNESCO, Paris. She also has a B.A. in Psychology from the National University of Singapore.



Lotfullah Najafizada is the Head of Current Affairs at Afghanistan’s first 24 hour news channel, TOLONews. In this capacity, Lotfullah oversees a team of 35 reporters, editors, show hosts, producers and researchers who produce 7 hours of live and pre-recorded content a day in the sphere of politics, economy and society, which sets the perception among the Afghan population and shapes the agenda in the Afghan politics. Lotfullah began his journalistic activities in mid-2004 for print media in the northern Afghan city of Mazar-e Sharif. Among his previous employments in the last eight years, Lotfullah also worked for the NATO mission in Afghanistan, providing strategic communications services. Lotfullah has conducted several high profile TV interviews with global leaders, among them British Prime Minister David Cameron, NATO Secretary General Andres Fogh Rasmussen, British Foreign Secretary William Hague and the top US Afghan commander General John Allen. As a World Press Institute fellow, Lotfullah conducted a research on the US mid-term elections in 2010. Lotfullah is a fellow with Asia Society’s Afghanistan Young Leaders Initiative (AYLI) (2011).



Kohei Nishiyama is Chairman of elephant design co., ltd. He founded of CUUSOO.com. The social platform CUUSOO.com serves over 130,000 consumers by allowing them to record their needs and wishes. CUUSOO then develops products and services to cater to those needs. To date, CUUSOO has launched 60 products, and the CUUSOO system is used in brands such as Muji, Tokyo Electric Power Company, and Lego. Kohei has previously worked at McKinsey and was nominated as a Young Global Leader in 2007 by the World Economic Forum, as well as one of the ‘100 Most Creative People’ by Fast Company in 2009.

Being a board member of Japan Institute of Design Promotion, he also serves as an executive board member of Icsid since 2011, and acts as advisor to Danish and Japanese governments. Kohei grew up in Colombia and speaks Spanish, Japanese and English. He graduated from the University of Tokyo.



Shinto Ekopuri Nugroho is the Special Assistant to Indonesia’s Minister of Trade where she provides policy advice on programs and activities that work to improve Indonesia’s business climate and global competitiveness. Previously, she led a program at the World Bank to reform regulations and licensing procedures for business start-ups for which she earned her a Triple A Award for development results, transparency, and direct impact to small businesses in 2009. She was also a senior associate at Makes and Partners law firm, where she specialized in bank and finance and led the restructuring and strategic

sale of Bank Central Asia. Shinto received a J.D. from Columbia University where she graduated as a Parker Scholar in International and Comparative law, and received a Master’s Degree in Social Policy and Planning from the London School of Economics.



Phloeun Prim is the first Director of Cambodian Living Arts (CLA). Under his directorship, the CLA has built a community of young artists and fostered a national renewal of the arts. Previously, Phloeun was a marketing strategist for Artisans d’Angkor, which trains and employs around a thousand rural youth to create and distribute high quality Cambodian crafts. Phloeun was born in Cambodia and was raised in Canada since the age of three. He returned to Cambodia in 1998 and joined a European Union program, which later became Artisans d’Angkor.



Sakuntala Seneviratne is a practicing clinician and a specialist in gynaecology and obstetrics at Base Hospital in Mulleriyawa, Sri Lanka. She is one of approximately 200 medical staff employed by the Sri Lankan government to provide free health care to a population of over 20 million people. In a career spanning eleven years, Sakuntala has served in five of the nine provinces of Sri Lanka. During her last post, her many duties included converting a low risk obstetric unit to a high risk unit, ensuring that the operating theatre facilities and emergency obstetric services were adequately supplied and maintained, reducing the mortality rate, and improving the infant delivery rate. Sakuntala holds an MBBS and MD, and is registered to practice in Sri Lanka and the United Kingdom.



Suvani Singh is the owner and the Co-Founder of Quixote's Cove, an independent bookshop that promotes reading and writing, and the Festival Director for Kathmandu Literary Jatra, a collaborative initiative that hosts annual international literature festivals in Nepal. She is also a Publisher at Safu Publications, an independent publishing company that will focus on children's literature, translations, and regional language publishing, with the first publications set to hit the market in early 2012. Previously, Suvani worked at Save the Children, Norway in Kathmandu, and was a communications specialist for documentary filmmakers and development agencies. She received her undergraduate degree in Literature from Sophia College, Mumbai, India.



Sonam Tashi is the Acting Chief Planning Officer for the Policy and Planning Division at the Ministry of Economic Affairs of Bhutan. He is also the main counterpart of the Ministry to the World Bank, International Finance Corporation, and Asian Development Bank, and is in charge of drafting the Renewable Energy Policy and Captive Power Policy. Sonam led the team that drafted the Economic Development Policy 2010, Foreign Direct Investment Policy 2010 and Framework for Private Participation in Infrastructure. He was also a member of the negotiating team for investments in the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multisectoral Technical and Economic Co-operation. Sonam received a Master's Degree from Cornell University for Internal Development with concentration in Development Finance, and earned his Bachelor's Degree in Economics and Political Science from the University of Delhi. He also has a diploma in Development Studies from the Institute of Developing Economies Advanced School



Eric Wong - Based in Beijing and New York, Eric Wong is an investment professional at Blue Ridge Capital, where he is responsible for seeking investments on behalf of the global investment fund. Prior to this, Eric advised multinationals on mergers-and-acquisitions in China with Morgan Stanley. He has authored Harvard Business School case studies on emerging markets investing. Outside of investments, Eric has advised the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts and Junior Achievement China on strategic projects. He currently serves as a Founding Board Member of Bard College Conservatory of Music. As a cellist, Eric has served as Principal Cellist of the Beijing International Chamber Orchestra and also had opportunities to perform in Carnegie Hall and Avery Fisher Hall. Eric holds an AB and an MBA from Harvard.