


Vital Voices and Bank of America Host Mentoring Program to Advance Women Leaders From Middle East, North Africa and Eastern Europe
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LONDON, Feb. 22, 2016 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- On Monday, February 22, Vital Voices Global Partnership and Bank of America will convene a weeklong mentorship initiative in London to empower women in business and social enterprise in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and Eastern Europe. This effort, which is part of the ongoing [Global Ambassadors Program](#) (#GlobalAmbassadors), a Vital Voices and Bank of America partnership, will include one-on-one mentoring sessions and strategic workshops focused on building organizational management, financial acumen and leadership skills.

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Women leaders face significant barriers in countries in the MENA region and Eastern Europe, including limited access to markets, finance, networks and business skills, as well as constraints from cultural conditions, religious laws and government practices. The Global Ambassadors Program in London takes place during a tenuous period for women leaders in MENA and a period of rebuilding for women leaders in Eastern Europe.

Program participants, who are promoting social change and economic growth in countries facing humanitarian crises, fractured economies and unstable governments, will discuss challenges and share strategies to achieve their goals, which support increased stability and prosperity in their respective countries. MENA is a region that could see significant gains from equalizing labor market activity, with the potential of increasing its annual GDP by 47 percent. In Eastern Europe and Central Asia, closing the gender gap could increase annual GDP by 23 percent¹.

"Women play a crucial role in advancing the global economy, with recent research indicating that their participation in labor markets could add as much as \$28 trillion to global annual GDP by 2025," said Anne Finucane, vice chairman, Bank of America. "By connecting women leaders from the Middle East, North Africa and Eastern Europe to mentoring for skills-building and broader networks, we can help bring more stability and prosperity to these regions."

In conjunction with the program, Vital Voices and Bank of America will host a public forum, "Women, Progress and the Global Economy," that will convene stakeholders and thought leaders to discuss contemporary issues concerning women's economic and social empowerment, with a special emphasis on women in the Middle East, North Africa and Eastern Europe. Building on announcements at this year's World Economic Forum in Davos regarding the critical importance of elevating women's economic empowerment, the public forum will examine how women's leadership and entrepreneurship have the power to address urgent societal issues. The forum will be broadcast live via www.bankofamerica.com/womenlead, and followers can join the conversation using #WomenLead.

"In this fifth year of our partnership with Bank of America, we are proud of the impact we've had on advancing women leaders as engines of economic growth and agents of social change," said Alyse Nelson, president and CEO of Vital Voices. "These women have pushed through so many barriers to achieve what they have, and now they are poised to grow, despite the challenges. They are truly inspiring."

Eleven Global Ambassadors (mentors) will be paired with mentees.

The mentors are:

- Alyazia Ali Al Kuwaiti, director of midstream and upstream investment, International Petroleum Investment Company (IPIC) (UAE)
- Amel Bouchamaoui Hammami, chair, Tunisia Partners for a New Beginning – North Africa Partnership for Economic Opportunity Advisory Board
- Jennifer Boussuge, head of Global Transaction Services, EMEA, Bank of America Merrill Lynch
- Shelley Brindle, executive vice president, Domestic Network Distribution, HBO
- Laura Cox Kaplan, principal-in-charge of U.S. Public Policy, PwC

- Reiko Hayashi, managing director, head of Japan Global Capital Markets, Global Corporate and Investment Banking, Bank of America Merrill Lynch Japan
- Kim Kingsley, chief operating officer, POLITICO
- Jessica A. Oppenheim, head of marketing, communications, and events for Global Banking and Markets, Bank of America Merrill Lynch
- Galina Melnikova, owner of HR Partners, Ltd. and MakeltWork.Ru
- Ahu Serter, president, Farplas Group
- Iman Wadi, general manager, International Elevators Group "Schindler"

The mentees are:

- Shani Aloni, executive director, Haifa Rape Crisis Center (HRCC)
- Biljana Dakić Đorđević, executive director, Trag Foundation
- Irma Daushvili, general director and founder, DIO Ltd.
- Meryam El Ouafi, founder and general manager, Chemsayour Ltd.
- Zeynep Harezi, business development director, Karpowership
- Khadija Idrissi Janati, founder and CEO, KMK Groupe
- Lamice Joujou, CEO, My Doll & Me
- Aline Kamakian, CEO and co-founder, FIG Holding
- Tatyana Mikayilova, managing partner, RED Communications
- Tinatin Rukhadze, general director, Analysis & Consulting Team (ACT)
- Velma Šarić, founder and executive director, Post-Conflict Research Center (PCRC)

The confirmed public forum speakers include:

- Christiane Amanpour, chief international correspondent, CNN
- Kim Azzarelli, co-founder, Seneca Women; co-author, "Fast Forward"
- Amel Bouchamaoui Hammami, chair, Tunisia Partners for a New Beginning – North Africa Partnership for Economic Opportunity Advisory Board
- Shelley Brindle, executive vice president, Domestic Network Distribution, HBO
- Elizabeth Dibble, deputy chief of mission, U.S. Embassy, London
- Anne Finucane, vice chairman, Bank of America
- Baroness Mary Goudie, member, British House of Lords
- Atifete Jahjaga, president, Republic of Kosovo
- Alyse Nelson, president and CEO, Vital Voices Global Partnership
- Andrew Plepler, environmental, social and governance executive, Bank of America
- Ahu Serter, president, Farplas Group
- Ambassador Melanne Verweir, executive director, Institute for Women, Peace and Security, Georgetown University; co-author, "Fast Forward"; co-founder, Seneca Women
- Alex Wilmot-Sitwell, president, EMEA, Bank of America Merrill Lynch

The Global Ambassadors Program is part of Bank of America's and Vital Voices' ongoing commitment to investing in women's leadership development, a goal guided by the belief that strong leaders are important to healthy, vibrant communities including advancing economic growth. Over time, mentors help their mentees develop critical communications, advocacy and business skills and strategies to advance their work. Since the Global Ambassadors Program launched in 2012, mentoring programs have been held in Poland, Northern Ireland, Mexico, Qatar, Singapore, Brazil, India, South Africa, Haiti, Japan and now London, reaching women from more than 40 countries. Future locations will be announced this year.

For more information on the Global Ambassadors Program, visit www.bankofamerica.com/globalambassadors. Follow [@BofA_News](https://twitter.com/BofA_News) and [@VitalVoices](https://twitter.com/VitalVoices) for updates via #GlobalAmbassadors.

¹ McKinsey Global Institute, [The Power of Parity: How advancing women's equality can add \\$12 trillion to global growth](https://www.mckinsey.com/~/media/McKinsey/Issues%20and%20Insights/Articles%20and%20Reports/The%20Power%20of%20Parity/The%20Power%20of%20Parity.pdf)

Vital Voices Global Partnership

Vital Voices Global Partnership invests in women leaders who improve the world. Founded by then First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, and guided by the belief that women are essential to progress in their communities, it has partnered with leaders from more than 140 countries who advance economic opportunity, increase


political and public leadership, and end violence against women. Programs in strategic planning, business, advocacy and communications build critical skills needed for creating transformational change at scale. Through its global platform, women leaders expand their connections and visibility, accelerating shared progress for all. Visit www.vitalvoices.org to learn more.

Bank of America

At Bank of America, corporate social responsibility (CSR) is critical to fulfilling our core purpose of making people's financial lives better. A commitment to growing our business responsibly is embedded in every aspect of our company, from our policies and practices to our services, products, governance and employee benefits. An important part of that commitment is forming strong partnerships across sectors, including nonprofit organizations serving community needs, bringing our collective networks and expertise to achieve greater impact. We're proud of our employees' volunteer efforts, support of diversity and inclusion, and environmental and social responsibility. Across our company, we're focused on simplifying banking and investing, advancing better money habits and making an impact in communities around the world. Learn more at www.bankofamerica.com/about and follow us on Twitter at [@BofA_News](https://twitter.com/BofA_News).

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