

# Shifting boundaries

The 38th Asia Region Law Enforcement Management Program in Vietnam was a significant initiative for women in leadership.

It was a special occasion for the 38th Asia Region Law Enforcement Management Program (ARLEMP) that brought international participants together under the theme *Women in Police Leadership – Making it Happen*.

This program presented the opportunity for senior AFP women in leadership to attend. AFP speakers and mentors included Chief of Staff Justine Saunders, AFP Women's Network Chair Andrea Quinn, and Liaison Officer Ho Chi Minh City Paula Hudson.

They were joined by an extraordinary group of women presenters from law enforcement agencies, diplomatic missions, UN agencies, the private sector and NGOs from around the world.

The AFP members joined law enforcement colleagues in Vietnam for the specially convened ARLEMP to promote the advancement of women police leaders in the Asia region.

The 10-day program included participants from Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Hong

Kong, India, Indonesia, Korea, Laos, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Vietnam.

The program was seen as such a significant opportunity to promote gender equity in Asia that the AFP successfully negotiated with the Australian Aid Economic Diplomacy Fund and the Australia-Asia Program To Combat Trafficking In Persons to fully fund the program; a first for ARLEMP.

The program aim was to enhance women officers' professional capacity, confidence and resilience. Participants built robust networks, enhanced leadership and management skills and improved their communication, presentation and technical skills.

The program featured on the front page of Vietnam's Communist Party newspaper highlighting the importance and need for the program within the region. This unique program was an important milestone for the ARLEMP and a significant opportunity for many participating police agencies to bring women's leadership issues to the fore.

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ARLEMP



*Women in Police Leadership – Making it Happen* was the special theme of the 38th Asia Region Law Enforcement Management Program in Vietnam.

Assistant Commissioner Saunders attended as a program mentor for five days. The positive feedback received from participants about Assistant Commissioner Saunders clearly demonstrated that the attendance of such a senior AFP officer served as true inspiration to others.

“Reflecting on my own career and those of other senior women in this room, I can say with confidence that women are natural leaders,” Assistant Commissioner Saunders says.

“Women are tough and resilient. Women bring different styles of leadership to policing which are more consultative and inclusive, therefore influencing and promoting positive organisational change without relying on our authority.”

The fact that AFP Commissioner Andrew Colvin released Assistant Commissioner Saunders and Commander Quinn from duties to attend the program is again testament to the AFP’s commitment to developing women in leadership.

## Growing bonds

Developed in 2003, ARLEMP is a multi-partner arrangement between the AFP, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) and the General Department of Police of Vietnam’s Ministry of Public Security (MPS).

ARLEMP has featured the gamut of transnational crime from corruption and foreign bribery to people smuggling and high-tech crime. ARLEMP 38 was specifically designed to identify and develop emerging female law enforcement leaders.

Through the resultant network, ARLEMP enables the building of influence and operational collaboration with partner law enforcement agencies.

More than 750 police and law enforcement officials from 25 countries (including more than 200 Vietnamese police) have participated in the course. Thirteen per cent of graduates from the ARLEMP program have been women.

In addition to ARLEMP, AFP’s involvement in Vietnam also includes the AFP-funded Vietnam-Australia Joint Transnational Crime Centre (JTCC).

Foreign Affairs Minister Julie Bishop recognised the benefits of both the JTCC and ARLEMP in strengthening Australia’s 42-year relationship with Vietnam.



*Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop is a strong supporter of the AFP's gender initiatives in the Asia region.*

Ms Bishop represents the Australian Government and with the Ambassador for Women and Girls Natasha Stott Despoja works collaboratively to promote gender equality and to ensure that the empowerment of women and girls is a central pillar of Australia's government diplomacy. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has recognised that ARLEMP contributes significantly to maintaining multi-lateral law enforcement relationships between Australia and regional partners.

Senior Liaison Officer Vietnam Chris McDevitt is the present manager of ARLEMP. He says the theme proposed by the AFP was well supported by international research and fits with the United Nations Global Effort launched in 2009 to recruit more female police officers into national police services around the world.

"Importantly, the women-in-police-leadership theme was strongly advocated by ARLEMP alumni," Commander McDevitt says. "When consulted by RMIT, it was proposed that a women-only ARLEMP would receive the highest levels of support from the police hierarchy in their countries."

A primary outcome of ARLEMP 38 was for participants to complete two assignments aligned with the program objectives. The benefits could then be taken back to their home agencies.

The first activity was to develop a personal action plan or career path map charting their individual commitment to action on leadership development.

Secondly, participants were asked to prepare an *ARLEMP 38 Commitment to Advance Women in Police Leadership*.

The aim was to develop an agreed collaborative approach to implementing practical regional actions to promote women's leadership opportunities within policing in the next 12 months. Actions to achieve this commitment will be reviewed by RMIT/AFP at key intervals post ARLEMP 38.

The response to the program was overwhelmingly positive. Course feedback highlighted just how important the program was for women leaders who may not have the same opportunities at home.

"ARLEMP is great for me. This is the most significant opportunity in my police career to learn about management and transnational cooperation. In one week, it is really building my confidence in this area. I feel I am developing my skills as a manager."

Another stated: "I've never had an opportunity like this in my career to speak with so many inspiring women leaders from different walks. It expanded our thinking and realisation about role models and gave helpful ideas for our own professional situations. Thank you to all."