

Programme Round Up: 40th Global Leaders Programme

Hong Kong and Sri Lanka | 16 - 27 March 2015

The Global Leaders Programme (GLP) is the flagship executive education programme offered by GIFT. It is recognised internationally for its intellectual rigour, its beyond-classroom methodology and its output driven approach to executive learning.

The challenge for participants on the 40th Global Leaders Programme (GLP), GIFT's first in Sri Lanka, was to produce a robust micro-insurance business plan for a leading local conglomerate, LOLC Group. LOLC Group already counts the country's top micro-credit company in its portfolio and is keen to leverage this business along with other Group resources to deliver a variety of insurance solutions customised for communities at the base of the economic pyramid.

According to a report by Allianz, micro-insurance is broadly defined as any insurance coverage whose premium does not exceed US\$2.5/month. It has an estimated market size of 2.7 billion people and approximately US\$40 billion in potential annual premiums. Besides playing a vital role in protecting the poor from unexpected shocks and thus helping to break the poverty cycle, the nascent micro-insurance sector also presents vast business opportunities for forward thinking insurance and financial services companies. In Sri Lanka alone over half of the population, between 10 and 13 million people, are in need of appropriate and affordable insurance products ranging from Life to Property to Agricultural cover.



Photo credit: Brett Davies – winning photographer of The Other Hundred Entrepreneurs, 2014

During Module One of the programme, held in Hong Kong, participants were encouraged to question mainstream business orthodoxy and conventional wisdom regarding the critical economic, social and environmental issues shaping the 21st century.

Participants hailed from 11 different countries and 12 organisations including HSBC China & India, NEC and ORIX Japan, Maybank and BSN Malaysia and Robeco Netherlands, among others. This diversity of industries, cultures and backgrounds provided a rich learning environment and led to many lively and thoughtful discussions around what type of skill-sets, knowledge and insights are required of leaders in today's dynamic business environment.

The GLP uses an internationally recognised methodology and content refined over dozens of programmes to cover topics that are often overlooked in traditional business education.

GIFT mentors and guest speakers, all practitioners themselves, facilitated conversations around issues including globalisation and why the 21st century will be different, the role of the state in shaping public policy and global drivers of change such as population growth and resource constraints. Participants also explored the externalities associated with goods and services, the nature of prosperity and the vast business opportunities serving “base of the pyramid” consumers.



Participants from Hong Kong, India, Japan, Malaysia and Philippines share their views regarding the recent impacts of globalisation in the Asia region.



Managers from HSBC, ORIX and Robeco assume the role of the government during multi-stakeholder negotiations based on a real world infrastructure project in Myanmar.

Original GIFT content delivered during Module One included a session by founder and CEO Chandran Nair called *Reshaping Capitalism* and another on the *Role of Business in Society* facilitated by Managing Director Eric Stryson.

Chandran's talk and the discussion that ensued stretched participants' thinking around how capitalism must adapt to address contemporary social, environmental and economic challenges. Eric's session provoked a vibrant debate on the social contract between business, government and society and led to many questions and ideas about what companies must do to stay relevant at a time when expectations for the private sector are constantly evolving.

A key message emphasised throughout the GLP is the importance of seeking knowledge and insights from a broad variety of sources. Only by doing this are effective leaders able to connect the dots and make informed decisions in the face of complex problems. With this in mind guest speakers from a variety of backgrounds were invited to share their views on topics ranging from *Leadership in a Changing World* and *Managing the Human Factor* to *The Role of Media* and *Gender Diversity in Leadership*.

Former Chairman and CEO of HSBC David Eldon drew on 40 years of leadership experience and put the challenge to participants to remain true to themselves and their core values regardless of what professional role or title they carry. Zoher Abdoolcarim, Asia Editor of Time International, led a session about the role of media in society and the implications telling one story that can have many narratives.



GLP guest speakers (from left to right): Former HSBC chairman and CEO David Eldon, Asia Editor of Time International Zoher Abdoolcarim, Managing Director and Head of Regulatory Compliance for Hong Kong Exchanges & Clearing Limited Angelina Kwan and Head of Organisation Development & Change with Swire Group Graham Barkus.



The COO of LOLC Micro Credit Rohana Kumara (left) and CEO of LOLC Insurance Gehan Rajapakse (right)

For Module Two of the GLP the group traveled to Sri Lanka's commercial capital Colombo and transitioned into the field project. They heard from senior management at LOLC to find out more about the micro-insurance industry and the Group's expectations for the project.

Participants also spent time in and around the ancient capital of Kandy where they met with various project stakeholders to gain insights into the micro-insurance industry. These meetings included existing customers of LOLC Micro Credit, local government, community leaders and NGOs as well as SME customers of LOLC Finance whose employees are potential micro-insurance beneficiaries.



Left to right: Participants meet with LOLC Micro Credit customers in Digana outside Kandy; Chandran Nair (centre) discusses the project with the 'business model taskforce'; participants consider the flow and logic of the final report.

Stakeholder meetings in Kandy were followed by intensive business planning in Colombo. Final recommendations made by participants included bundling micro-insurance with public transport, agricultural inputs and savings accounts as well as targeting the migrant worker community as a key customer segment by teaming up with remittance agencies to offer insurance to their dependents. The output also included enabling policy recommendations such as permitting insurance companies to certify agents for specific products. Currently only the regulator offers certification and relaxing this rule, as has been done in various other countries, could significantly increase the penetration of micro insurance in Sri Lanka.

Participants presented these recommendations to senior leadership from LOLC Group companies and industry regulator the Insurance Board of Sri Lanka. Tough but constructive questions were posed by the audience and after some lively discussion Group Managing Director Kapila Jayawardena and LOLC Insurance CEO Gehan Rajapakse expressed their gratitude to participants and their intention to explore many of the suggestions further.



Kapila Jayawardena, Group Managing Director of LOLC (upper right) and Patrick Zhu of HSBC China (lower right) address the audience during the final presentation. Participants pose for a photo with their new Sri Lankan friends and colleagues (below)



To learn more about the GLP contact Karim Rushdy at krushdy@global-inst.com or visit www.global-inst.com