

**Creating a "New World Order" - Women Leaders Impacting Turkey and Beyond**



By Linda Alepin

At the beginning of June, I had the distinct privilege of speaking at the inaugural Women Entrepreneurship and Leadership Conference in Istanbul, Turkey. I thank KAGIDER, the women entrepreneur's NGO in Turkey, for the kind invitation and marvelous hospitality. Here are a few highlights from the conference, from our reunion with our Women Leaders for the World graduates (Tara Agacayak, Sema Basol, Bahar Kayserilioglu, Selin Oz, and Dilek Percin) and from our Behind the Bazaar two-day tour

**Conference**

The main message of the conference was framed from the very opening remarks by Gulseren Onanc, president of KAGIDER, to be our chance to "write history together." Hillary Clinton, in recorded remarks, called the investment in women as entrepreneurs and leaders to be a "high yield investment". Melanne Verveer, the Ambassador-at-Large for Women's Global Issues in the Office of the Secretary in the U.S., called women a "powerful force for change." In private conversations with Ambassador Verveer, she applauded efforts like GWLN in building leadership capacity worldwide as essential to global progress.

Turkey is building on its long history of legislated women's rights. Ataturk, founder of the Republic of Turkey, was a visionary leader who insisted on equal rights for women in 1932. He once said, "In a society or nation consisting of men and women, how is it possible to elevate one part of that society and expect the nation to prosper." On a practical level, however, Turkey has a long way to go to make equality a reality. The current Minister of National Education said that they are targeting 100% schooling for girls, especially those in the remote parts of the country. There are only 9.4% women in their Parliament. With less than 28% of women in the labor force (a statistic that is currently falling), there must be more emphasis on the economic independence of women.

To that end, Garanti Bank has launched several significant programs to stimulate women as entrepreneurs. First, the bank has extended more than \$90 Million in low interest loans to them. Second, they have sponsored a series of seminars in five provinces of Anatolia which helped more than 3,000 women learn about marketing, management, technology, et cetera. They have put in place a

website, annual awards recognizing outstanding progress, and they were the primary sponsor of this conference as well. GWLN salutes their efforts.

### **Women Leaders for the World Graduates**

What have our WLW graduates in Turkey been doing? Here are samples of what is possible when women take on the attitude of "YES WE CAN":

- Bahar and Selin (WLW 2007) partnered to put on the Garanti/KAGIDER seminars in Anatolia
  - Selin is the manager for Garanti's \$90 M loan program. As her boss said, "Since coming back from WLW, she "owns" the program and its outcomes."
  - Bahar, with the help of the Akbank, has led the opening of KAGIDER's women's center in downtown Istanbul modeled after the one in South San Francisco (see the video at -- I will give you a UTube location)
  - Dilek Percin (2008) has expanded the influence of her Golcuk Art Center to South America
  - Sema Basol (2007) is in the process of developing Turkish Women's Initiative by establishing a series of alliances with various organizations
  - Tara Agacayak has established two businesses - one helping to export Turkish women artisans products and the other a consultancy on how to manage the artisans' businesses
- Behind the Bazaar Tour

We spent two delightful days after the conference visiting various women artisans' businesses around Istanbul. I was joined on the tour by Californians -- Alice Brunson, Carol Mills, Carol Sands, and Bess Stephens -- plus friends from Istanbul itself. Since I cannot do the tour's content proper justice, I have asked Tara and her partner, Figen Cakir to create a short article about what we saw. Suffice it to say, I learned about ancient and modern techniques and designs that are used to create beautiful products. (See article: Behind the Bazaar)

### **Final Thoughts**

Women around the globe are making progress towards their own equality and towards contributing to building strong economic and social structures. It is important for us to stand in solidarity. It is important for us to make our voices heard - from the family to the government, from universities to board rooms, from the media to the pulpit. Trips like this one make me keenly aware that there is much to celebrate and there is much work yet to be done.



# Global Women's Leadership Network

*Whole Woman, Whole Leader, Whole World*

## NEWSLETTER

### FEATURED WOMAN LEADER

#### A Visionary Path of Courage and Passion

By Nicola Walker



**Sarah Asad**

Sarah Asad, age 28, lives and works in Lahore, Pakistan. Her remarkable sense of mission and purpose began when her eyes were opened to the plight and suffering of juvenile delinquents who were languishing in prisons in Punjab. Sarah was working as a consultant for UNICEF and writing a thesis on nutrition at the time.

"I was certainly not prepared to see innocent faces of 9 and 10 year olds accused of rape and murder, and abetting kidnappings! Many of the children I met had run away from home because of physical abuse and other forms of violence perpetrated by family members. These children either ended up in prison or surviving on the street and were subject to sexual abuse and exploitation night after night. I was filled with anger and outrage, and the firm decision that I wanted to protect children from these horrible injustices."

Sarah is now Executive Director of Pahchaan (Protection and Help of Children Against Abuse and Neglect), an NGO working for vulnerable children, which she set up with a group of like-minded volunteers. In just three years, Pahchaan has established three more offices and expanded to a staff of more than 30 people, helping over 1,000 children. Pahchaan's work includes repatriation and rehabilitation of runaway children, safe facilities for street children, street-based learning programs for working children, hospital-based services for sexually, physically and emotionally abused children, and health care and educational services for vulnerable or needy children.

Over 10,000 service providers, doctors, teachers, parents, employers of child laborers and other caregivers have now been educated on child protection through Pahchaan's work. Pahchaan has also worked with police, railway/bus stations, universities, social welfare institutions and the local population to establish child protection systems. In the absence of a comprehensive social welfare net by the

government, Sarah is committed to the work of Pahchaan and continuing to provide these essential services to the children in need.

Pahchaan earned the ISPCAN Multidisciplinary Award for its pioneering step to set up child protection service committees at hospitals. Sarah also received a Youth Icon award from the World Population Foundation and the first ISPCAN Presidential Scholarship, from among 2,000 delegates, in Brisbane, Australia.

Sarah learned the nuts and bolts of NGO management through the Young Development Professionals Fellowship Program by Aga Khan Foundation and in an exclusive one-year certificate training course at the premiere business school in Pakistan. Sarah was also very fortunate to participate in leadership and training programs through Johns Hopkins University, the David & Lucille Packard Foundation, Waldzell Dialogues Architects of the Future program (patron Paulo Coelho) and Santa Clara University's Global Women Leadership Network program, which helped hone her vision, inspiration and leadership abilities.

### **Sarah's Work Prevails Despite Cultural Obstacles & the Perils of Politics**

"It was very difficult starting Pahchaan when I was 24, because in our culture respect comes with age; I was not taken seriously by anyone," reflects Sarah. "Being a working woman does not help either. It is a closed society in Pakistan. NGOs are thought to be promoting an anti-Islamic agenda."

Nowadays Sarah has an additional burden-getting to and from her home safely. "Lately, Lahore, a city of vibrancy, has been enveloped in a pall of gloom following powerful suicide attacks I fear for my safety as my office and home are centrally located. Sometimes it makes me wonder, 'what is Pahchaan striving for and can we really leave an impact on anyone - because the impact of a bomb literally wipes away everything.'"

Although every day is a challenge, Sarah says, the rewards are too great to give up the good work. And there are many examples: a young child, surviving as a commercial sex worker visits a Pahchaan-trained psychologist at a drop-in center to admit he is ready to overcome his hashish addiction; a Pahchaan-trained doctor at a hospital convinces the parents of a raped girl to press charges against the perpetrator despite their strong cultural reservations. A runaway child, who has been emotionally traumatized, proudly tells a Pahchaan teacher that he has learned the alphabet and wants to return home and reconcile with his family.

What began for Sarah as a personal quest to satisfy curiosity about the plight of run-away children in Pakistan, has now become a highly successful life-long mission.



## Women at the Well™

**Topic:** Finding the Truth Beneath Your Fears

**Date:** July 17, 2009

**Time:** 7:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.

**Location:** Institute of Transpersonal Psychology,  
1069 East Meadow Circle, Palo Alto (Directions at  
[www.itp.edu/contact.php](http://www.itp.edu/contact.php). Do not use MapQuest; directions are incorrect.)

**Speaker:** Nicola Walker



Over the last 20 years, since she first learned how to listen to her inner guidance, Nicola has followed the golden thread of her personal truth. This has led her on a remarkable journey, from England to Colorado, and finally settling in California.

Throughout her journey, including a marriage and subsequent divorce, Nicola has discovered that her depth and clarity of inner guidance was, in fact, directly proportionate to her fear.

Once in California, Nicola continued to follow her dreams as a life coach, only to face serious financial challenges. Listening to her inner guidance, letting the fear drop away and allowing love to prevail, Nicola was guided to put her possessions in storage and housesit.

During this period, which Nicola refers to as her "time in the desert," she came to truly know that she has always been taken care of by the Universe. She has become extremely flexible, deepening her sense of gratitude, compassion and an extraordinary ability to listen to guidance. Nicola has refocused her coaching and writing to support people having difficulty with transitions and to help them find the truth beneath their own fears.

Please join Nicola and discover how developing the courage to keep listening and inquiring into what's really true, and to follow the underlying wisdom that emerges, opens up our lives to incredible possibilities.



## **SPECIAL FEATURE**

### **BEHIND THE BAZAAR**

by Tara Lutman Agacayak

Based on my work for Citara's, Linda asked if I would put together a tour of "women entrepreneurial artisans" in the spirit of the Women Entrepreneurship and Leadership Summit. After strategizing with my Intarsia Concept (IC) partner Figen Cakir, we designed a two-day tour showcasing both artists using traditional methods as well as modern Turkish designers. We called the tour Behind the Bazaar alluding to all the creative entrepreneurs who can be found off the beaten tourist path.

On the first day of our tour, we visited a street in Istanbul that just happens to boast four women designers. One works in fiber and felting, one in paper, one in glass, and one who combines antique found fabric and handicrafts into contemporary clothing and accessories. In the spirit of this tour of entrepreneurial artisans, all of these women have built businesses out of their art and craft and have received much press and acclaim for their work. In recent news, we learned that the glass artisan was involved in designing the glass lamps at the newly renovated Sakirin Mosque, unique for being the first mosque in the world to be designed by a female - the renowned interior designer Zeynep Fadillioglu.

Later that day we traveled to the "old City" to visit a modern ceramic artist and an American designer who has one of the only women-owned shops in the Covered Bazaar. The ceramic artist is currently involved in a project to establish a brand in conjunction with other Bazaar craftspeople that authenticates products made specifically by masters of the Grand Bazaar. This is an important project as it differentiates original products from all the fakes and imports that have found their way to this famous shopping place.

Following this day of modern designers, we began our second day of the tour at a centuries-old Ottoman university known as a medrese. Today the medrese has been converted into an arts center where students learn traditional techniques such as marbling, ceramics and drawing miniatures. Visiting this center helped put the modern designers' work into perspective as tour participants were able to see how these old techniques influence the more modern work that was seen on the tour.

We ended the day visiting a showroom of high-end Selcuk-inspired jewelry and home décor pieces as

well as that of a woman-owned textile and home accessories company who have all their products handmade by weaving families and craft masters.

Figen and I were inspired by the responses we received from those on the tour and have decided to offer this tour on a continual basis. Under the name "Behind the Bazaar" we have created other themed visits around Istanbul that highlight the work of independent entrepreneurial artisans and designers in Turkey. This falls in line with our mission to support the development of creative businesses and we are encouraged by the way in which this engages both artists and visitors. It would be a great pleasure to take other friends of GWLN Behind the Bazaar to visit these amazing artists. Hope to see you in Istanbul soon!