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Developing a pool of women leaders

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APART from the Singapore Council of Women's Organisations, several other groups and corporations are doing their bit to develop a pool of women leaders here. Take the Young Women's Leadership Connection (YWLC), for instance. Launched last year by UBS and Senior Minister of State for Finance and Transport Lim Hwee Hua, the initiative has reached out to about 150 female undergraduates at the local universities through a series of seminars and networking sessions. The project aims to groom female leadership in all areas, be it corporate, social or community.

So far, women from the business and political arenas, such as Ascott Group president and chief executive Jennie Chua and Member of Parliament (Pasir Ris-Punggol GRC) Penny Low, have shared their work experiences and personal values with the students.

'Feedback from both the guest speakers and students has been excellent,' Mrs Lim told BT. 'For the guest speakers, these are ladies who've always felt they would like to give back, so that has been fulfilled through the sessions.' As for the students, they have been encouraged by the sharing sessions, knowing that there are women who have gone through issues they are now facing, said Mrs Lim.

The YWLC is shortlisting women undergraduates for a pilot mentoring programme which may last up to six months. Selected students will be able to spend time with prominent women - including some of the guest speakers - and they also have to take part in community or social projects.

And depending on how the YWLC develops, there could be collaborations with other associations in future. 'That is entirely possible and, in fact, for true networking, that probably would have to be a feature,' Mrs Lim said.

UBS also launched a Power Up programme in December. The project identifies within the bank, capable women managers in their 30s who have somehow been hesitant in taking on more challenges. 'We want to identify the issues that are stopping them from going further,' said UBS Singapore's chief operating officer Teo Lay Sie. Besides helping the women develop their full potential, 'it's also about planning the leadership pipeline', Mrs Teo said. 'It's succession planning.'

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