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Anne Pachciarek, a partner at DLA Piper's Chicago office (center), poses for a photo with a group of Nepali women attorneys. Pachciarek was one of eight DLA Piper attorneys that teamed up with Women Lawyers Joining Hands and the Nepal Bar Association to host a week of legal trainings for 60 women attorneys in Kathmandu, Nepal, March 26 to 31. *Photo courtesy of DLA Piper.*

Firm trains female lawyers in Nepal

BY EMILY DONOVAN
Law Bulletin staff writer

At a training session in late March, a few female lawyers from DLA Piper offices mentioned to a group of Nepali female lawyers that, for periods of time, their husbands stayed home to take care of the children while the wives continued to work.

"The Nepali women were just, like, shocked they [the husbands] would do that," said Anne M. Pachciarek, a partner at DLA

Eight DLA Piper attorneys spent six days in Kathmandu to help 60 women advance in law

Piper in Chicago.

Those kinds of conversations — how to balance having a demanding legal career and have a family life — were part of a week of legal education training in Kathmandu, Nepal, from March 26 to 31, coordinated by DLA Piper's nonprofit affiliate New Perimeter, the Cana-

dian organization Women Lawyers Joining Hands and the Nepal Bar Association.

Eight DLA Piper attorneys from its offices in Silicon Valley, Baltimore, Chicago, Austin, Texas, Seattle, Calgary, Alberta, and Sydney met with Nepali lawyers from the bar association to train a total

of 60 Nepali female lawyers over six days.

It was the biggest event of its kind in Nepal, according to Saroj K. Ghimire, member secretary of the Nepal Bar Association Coordinating Committee and one of the trainers at the session.

There are 18,160 lawyers in Nepal, all licensed by the Nepal Bar Association. Only 2,200 of them are women.

Furthermore, there are 174 highly rated "senior advocates" licensed by the full court of the

Supreme Court of Nepal, and only four of those are women.

Women in Nepal aren't encouraged to become lawyers like men are, Ghimire said. They have greater familial responsibilities, less access to education, fewer peers and role models of their gender, less job security and less access to training, seminars, networking, support and motivation. Furthermore, he said, law firms and senior lawyers are reluctant to hire female lawyers, which limits many Nepali women to practicing in family and sometimes criminal law.

"A lot of the issues that women face, you know, in the United States are similar issues to what they face," Pachciarek said.

Some stateside solutions translated to Nepal too, as Pachciarek said DLA Piper and Nepali attorneys discussed ideas like including child care facilities in firms, human resources policies like maternity leave that are designed to retain women and there being other women peers and mentors at the firm as ways to help women succeed in legal careers.

The event was an expansion of the first training session the same organizations hosted in December 2015. There, a group of 30 Nepali

female lawyers of different ages trained in corporate law.

Thirty new participants took basic courses in corporate and commercial law for the first three days, and 30 other women — mostly returning from the 2015 training — took advanced courses in intellectual property and arbitration the next three days.

Pachciarek landed on a Thursday, took Friday to get acclimated, met with the other trainers on Saturday and trained from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at a conference center for the next six days.

They would break up each day with meals and tea, taking the opportunity to chat and network.

Everyone wore headsets as two translators at a time translated between English and Nepali during training sessions.

Nepali professionals know English well, Pachciarek said, but the American dialect, idioms and legal jargon were tricky to understand. She and other trainers had to explain terms like "elevator pitch." In small groups talking informally without translators, Pachciarek said often one of the Nepali women would translate on behalf of the others in the group if something confusing arose.

Pachciarek said she could see the Nepali women's confidence build throughout even the first day as they would raise their hands more and smile. By the end of the week, she said there were lots of hugs and selfies.

"I believe they will remain in communication with the Nepal Bar and with us," Ghimire said. "I saw them very excited and optimistic after the conclusion of the training they had with the lawyers of DLA Piper and national trainers."

Suzanna Brickman, pro bono counsel in DLA Piper's Silicon Valley office who managed the project, said the sessions let her firm build sustainable legal institutions and capacity on the ground as well as focus on women's empowerment and advancement.

"That was a huge part of what we wanted to accomplish: To help advance the training a little bit and to also allow them to build a support network among one another so that they can help one another," Pachciarek said.

Pachciarek said trainees plan to meet once a month to share ideas and encouragement.

"That is a great example of project sustainability, even after

we've been in-country," Brickman said.

Pachciarek said she has "like 100" new Facebook friends in Nepal, who she plans to keep in touch with.

Unlike the lawyers who hop into taxis and trains after seminars in Chicago, the lawyers in Kathmandu boarded motor scooters at the ends of each day to navigate the narrow streets in the ancient city, wearing helmets and face masks that protected them from dust still airborne from the 2015 magnitude 8 earthquake that killed nearly 9,000 Nepalis and left nearly 3.5 million homeless.

The federal parliamentary republic is considered one of the poorest and least developed countries in the world, according to the CIA World Factbook. Its constitution was passed in 2015.

"Given all of the changes that are happening now in Nepal, it was just really wonderful to be there and provide a program that I hope will serve women within the profession and that that will enhance the women's abilities to practice in substantive areas, to join the bench and really further this goal of gender equality," Brickman said.