

Hand in Hand for a World that Empowers All Women

Japan is working to advance gender equality, alongside the governments of developing nations and a wide variety of institutions including UN Women, which offers expertise regarding gender issues. In particular, Japan seeks to empower women in developing nations with its expertise in the areas of education and healthcare management, via projects led by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

One of the problems to be solved is the low availability of education for girls. In Pakistan's education system, for example, in many cases boys and girls go to separate schools from middle school onward. Girls' schools in rural regions are scarce, however, forcing many girls without a school within commuting distance to discontinue their education. And even in schools with both genders, there have been cases of female students dropping out due to the lack of women's restrooms in the schools. In the southern province of Sindh, JICA is providing grants to build schools, classrooms, and restrooms for girls to alleviate these problems. "I hope that by enabling girls to continue their education, we can expand the opportunities available to them," explains Ayumi Yuasa of the Office for Gender Equality and Poverty Reduction of JICA's Infrastructure and Peace Building Department.

JICA is also encouraging widespread use of Maternal and Child Health Handbooks (MCH Handbooks), an idea originating in Japan. JICA is strengthening continuum of care for mothers and infants, through the use of MCH Handbooks tailored to the unique conditions of each country, in 25 countries. In addition to recording pregnancy, childbirth, and infancy, MCH Handbooks serve as a guide for childrearing. In regions where malnourishment of mothers and children is a problem, for example, the books contain extensive information regarding proper nutrition, such as "foods to eat during pregnancy and the breastfeeding period." "Expanding the knowledge of mothers allows them to make their own judgments about the health care of their children and of themselves, which might otherwise be left to doctors and midwives," finds Yuasa. In Indonesia, continuum of care for mothers and infants that is focused on the use of MCH Handbooks has led to a reduction of the maternal mortality rate. In light of such results, JICA is cooperating with the World Health Organization (WHO) to develop international guidelines for MCH Handbooks and further expand their use.

Side by side with the world, Japan will continue moving forward with these and other efforts in order to create "a society in which all women can shine."



In the southern Pakistani province of Sindh, additional school buildings and classrooms for girls are scheduled for construction, which are expected to provide access to education for over 6,600 students. © Matsuda Consultants International Co., Ltd.



Indonesian Maternal and Child Health Handbooks contain plenty of illustrations to make them easy for everyone to understand. © JICA

A Message from the UN Women Executive Board Secretary

Our ability to create a world in which women and girls can play full and active roles in both public and private life is essential for the peace and sustainability of countries, communities and families.

As one of UN Women's closest partners, Japan has provided political, financial and advocacy support that is helping to drive progress toward this goal. Japan's financial support has enabled us to reach out to thousands of women in areas affected by war, in communities where women are in need of sustainable livelihoods, and where young people need access to the means to further their training and education. And the country's engagement in UN Women's HeForShe IMPACT 10x10x10 initiative—through Champions Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Nagoya University president Seiichi Matsuo—is helping to engage men and boys as allies for gender equality.

Japan's World Assembly for Women (WAW!) continues to provide important momentum in our efforts toward a world in which women and girls have the chance to shine. Last year's WAW! resulted in several key proposals, including those for the creation of working environments that are enabling and flexible for women and men, boosting women's participation in decision-making in peacebuilding and peacekeeping, and promoting women's sexual and reproductive health and rights.

The conference highlighted the critical importance of increasing the numbers of women and girls in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) education and careers, with proposals for breaking down negative stereotypes and promoting positive role models, strengthening partnership between the public and private sectors to support women in STEM jobs, and promoting gender equality throughout society to propel more women and girls up the pipeline into rewarding employment in science and technology.

Through these initiatives, and all of our ongoing work together as partners, UN Women and Japan must continue to work to transform attitudes, behaviors and practices so that women and girls are empowered to take the lead in shaping our societies.



Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka
Executive Director of UN Women



World leaders gathering at WAW! 2016 to promote women's empowerment. (December 2016)



Prime Minister Abe speaking at the HeForShe IMPACT 10x10x10 Parity Report Launch Event. (September 2017)