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Realizing

Gender Equality Through Empowering Women

G ender can refer to the unconsciously constructed roles of men and women, as well as their mutual relationships, based on such factors as culture, tradition, and customs. Deep-rooted gender inequality, especially in developing nations, frequently places women in a disadvantaged position with regard to education, healthcare, labor, and other aspects of society. The promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women is a priority of the Millennium Development Goals and will remain an important part of the post-2015 development agenda.

Eliminating gender inequality is essential to realizing JICA's goal of inclusive development. Molding an environment where women-half of the world's population-can reach full potential will create a solid force for growth, leading to higher economic productivity and more dynamic societies. For years, JICA has focused on implementing a wide variety of projects with the goal of eliminating gender inequality and empowering women. It has also promoted a comprehensive approach of "gender mainstreaming" that incorporates the gender perspective in all policy and program stages-from planning to implementation, monitoring, and evaluation-in order to respond to gender-based development issues, needs, and impacts.

In September 2013, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, addressing the Sixty-Eighth Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, discussed the importance of realizing the advancement of women. Before the international community, he affirmed Japan's intention of creating a society where women can "shine," meaning the enhancement of women's capabilities and voices and of environments to enable them. This issue of *JICA's World* features JICA programs and projects to date advancing gender equality and women's empowerment, with the goal of a better world for all.

Realizing Gender Equality Through Empowering Women





Rejuvenating Nigeria's Women Development Centers

igeria has enjoyed significant economic growth in recent years as Africa's largest petroleum producer. While women play an increasingly important role in the country's economic success, obstacles blocking their full participation in society still remain. JICA has been involved in several projects with the goal of empowering women at the local level, assisting them in becoming more active, productive participants in society.

GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS STRIVE FOR EMPOWERMENT

Rising from the verdant jungle, the capital of Abuja, with its beeline roads and shining high-rises, stands as a symbol of growth for both Nigeria and Africa. Located in the central part of the country, the city was created with the help of Kenzo Tange, a renowned leader of the modern architecture movement in post–World War II Japan, and his team of urban planners.

Without question, petroleum has been the fuel for Nigeria's recent economic boom. Even as the economy grows, though, men have controlled the lion's share of economic activity; participation by women in society continues to be limited. This discrepancy is most noticeable in the Islamic northern region, where beliefs often constrain women to the home.

In the 1980s, Nigeria's eighth president, Ibrahim Babangida, led government efforts to raise the status of women in rural farming villages. These included the founding by Babangida's wife Maryam of the Better Life Program for Rural Women, which created over 700 Women Development Centers (WDCs) across the country to provide vocational training and education for women.

LACK OF RESOURCES AND INADEQUATE MANAGEMENT

The WDCs made strides at grassroots levels to raise



the standard of living of women, but the centers faced uncertainty after President Babangida stepped down from power in August 1993. Unable to secure appropriate funds under consecutive governments, WDCs around the country became moribund. By the end of the 1990s most had ceased to function adequately.

In 1995, the Nigerian government established the National Center for Women Development (NCWD) with the intention of researching gender issues and implementing vocational training programs. In the early 2000s, the NCWD, which oversees the WDCs, initiated a survey to gauge the level of work being done there. The survey found that centers had the potential to help women rise from poverty, but were unable to provide adequate services to meet the changing needs of users.

Since 2003, JICA has collaborated with the NCWD to revitalize Women Development Centers around the country. In January 2007, a project was started at WDCs in Nigeria's largest state of Kano. Located in the conservative Islamic north, Kano has a population of over 9 million and serves as an important commercial center for the country. The project aimed to make WDCs a viable model for the empowerment of disenfranchised women by providing education and vocational training to enable them to earn a living and raise their status in society.

SHARING SUCCESS WITH OTHER REGIONS

The project selected six WDCs in Kano as pilot centers and worked to define clear guidelines for running them. These efforts raised the quality of service and management at the centers, transforming them into self-sufficient and productive bodies and raising the acceptance of WDCs in the region.

When the project came to an end in January 2010, the Nigerian government asked JICA to initiate a second phase with the aim of extending the success achieved at the six pilot centers to other WDCs in Kano and throughout the country. Phase two, which began in February 2011 and will run for four years to February 2015, will involve six states: Kano and Kaduna in the north, Niger and Kwara in central Nigeria, and Anambra and Cross River in the south.

WORKING TO MEET CHANGING NEEDS

Paikoro is a district located 30 minutes by car from the Niger state capital of Minna. According to women development officer Pauline Daniel, around 80 women attend daily four-hour sessions at the Paikoro WDC, which provides training in such skills as sewing, knitting, beading, and dying.

During a sewing course at the center, the sounds of pedal-powered machines fill the room. "All Nigerian women have their clothing handmade," says one of the center's instructors, Hamia Mohammed. "It's all made to order, so sewing is a skill much in demand."

Hafusar Bello, a 22-year-old weaving student at the center, attends classes while carrying her baby on her back. "It's difficult to balance my time between studying at the center and duties at home, but it always makes me happy when a piece of clothing I'm working on comes out as planned," she says. "I have the support of my husband, and learning a skill will help me provide for our family." Like Bello, most students are in their twenties or late teens and cite a shift in societal norms allowing women more opportunities to work as a motivating factor in coming to the center to study.

Classes on knitting are taught with the machines used in actual work. Kiyomi Kaida, a member of a team of experts from JICA visiting the WDC, watches the activity and provides help where needed. "The machine stand is wobbly," she points out. "We're going to need to fix that." Addressing each issue, no matter how minute, helps improve the center's quality of service.

According to Lahama Baroa, a director at the Ministry of Women Affairs in the state of Niger, "We would like to introduce new courses beyond

JICA'S WORLD SEPTEMBER 2014 5

of the Abuja National Mosque (left) and

Nigeria.

majestic Aso Rock, Abuja,



A mother carries her child on her back as she attends a knitting class. Women Development Centers make it possible for mothers to take courses while looking after their children.





The newly rebuilt Paikoro WDC in the state of Niger.

One of the knitting machines used in classes at a Women Development Center.

> sewing and knitting to meet the growing needs of women at the center. Providing vital skills is a must to help ensure a bright future for these women and their families."

EXTENDING THE REACH OF THE WOMEN DEVELOPMENT CENTERS

"It is essential that women are involved in Nigeria's development," says Mallam Sadeeq Omar, director for planning, research, and statistics at the National Center for Women Development. "But in reality, few opportunities exist for women to put their abilities to work. This is where the government must step in to provide support." As part of its overall efforts, the NCWD recently began airing a weekly program on regional radio stations, explaining what the WDCs do for communities. Radio still serves as the primary source of information for many households in rural areas, and the NCWD hopes these programs will introduce the centers and their valuable roles to a wider audience and, just as importantly, increase their acceptance among more conservative family members.

The Haske Women's Cooperative, located in the suburbs of Minna, creates products for sale using shea nuts, a major crop in Nigeria. At the cooperative, local women make shea butter by first pounding the nuts using a stick and a stone mortar, then



Sandals and accessories crafted by students at a WDC. Centers provide new skills to help women.



JICA expert Kiyomi Kaida talks with students and instructors about clothing made during a WDC class.



Members of the Haske Women's Cooperative work in tandem to pound shea nuts (left). The resulting oil is used to make assorted soaps and hand creams.



adding water to the mixture to separate the oil. Shea butter is known for its moisturizing quality and is used widely as an ingredient in soaps and hand creams.

"The word *haske* means light, which is why we chose it for the organization," says cooperative head Zainabu Abu Bakhar. "The work we do here at the cooperative contributes to a brighter future for Nigerian women."

The Ministry of Women Affairs has begun efforts in the state of Niger to act as a bridge between women's cooperatives and WDCs. According to Kaida, "Women are often unsure after finishing courses how best to take advantage of what they've learned. One option is to start out on their own, but we also want them to consider working together with other women in the region."

Women gaily go about their tasks at the cooperative as the sun shines down on their smiling faces. When asked about the motto of the cooperative, Abu Bakhar replies, "Hard work is our pride."

Two weeks after the research took place for this article, news spread around the world of the shocking abduction of schoolgirls by a militant group in the north of the country. The road to empowerment for women in Nigeria, as well as in other developing nations, is still long and steep. But JICA is confident that the hard work of those on the ground will succeed in enacting positive change for women in these countries.



Working Together to Eradicate Human Trafficking in Myanmar

lobalization and growing economic inequality have transformed human trafficking, or trafficking in persons, into a serious worldwide threat. The US State Department estimates that there are 800,000 victims of human trafficking annually. These are principally poor women and children and other vulnerable members of society; one-third of the victims come from Southeast Asia.

A WORSENING SITUATION IN THE GREATER MEKONG SUB-REGION

Cross-border trafficking has become an especially serious problem in the six Mekong River countries of Cambodia, Viet Nam, Laos, Thailand, Myanmar, and China. From March 2009 to March 2014, JICA provided support to a multidisciplinary team consisting of governmental and nongovernmental agencies involved in the rescue and social reintegration of victims of trafficking in Thailand.

JICA has also been making concerted efforts toward preventing this trafficking. In Viet Nam, a project from July 2012 to July 2015 launched a hotline system, aiming to prevent human trafficking and support trafficked persons. Victims and family members can call the hotline for consultations. The service also collects information on trafficking and provides it to the concerned agencies.

SUPPORTING VICTIMS IN MYANMAR

Cases of trafficking are on the rise in Myanmar, where victims are often taken to Thailand and China to work in the sex industry and as sources of cheap labor. In 2009, JICA began an anti-trafficking project in Myanmar to help address this situation.

Myanmar has continued efforts to fight this scourge, such as by passing anti-trafficking legislation in 2005, drafting a five-year plan on trafficking, and participating in coordinated anti-trafficking



Counselors use role play to learn ways of interacting with trafficking victims (left). JICA expert Kyoko Katsuki speaks to participants in a counseling course.

plans with other counties in the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS). While these efforts have helped improve conditions by stepping up preventive measures, support for victims remains inadequate.

For one year starting in March 2009, JICA sent experts to Myanmar to investigate the level of support being provided to victims. The study found that while a support mechanism does exist to assist their reintegration to society, a poor understanding of the situation facing the victims and a lack of shelters for them highlighted the difficulty confronting rehabilitation and reintegration efforts.

To address this, JICA responded to a request from the Myanmar government with a project beginning in June 2012 to increase the aptitude of officers involved in supporting victims. In this project, set to run through June 2015, JICA is dispatching experts to provide training and instruction to social workers from Myanmar's Department of Social Welfare, police officers, and NGO members. The goal is to establish a sustainable support system for victims.

In addition to these JICA activities, the Government of Japan has been providing grant aid via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to support construction of shelters for trafficking victims.

HELPING VICTIMS RETURN TO SOCIETY

Upon their return to Myanmar, victims spend the first few days at a shelter. After being interviewed by social workers from the welfare and police departments, they return home to their families. Many staff members, however, lack adequate understanding of how to provide proper assistance for these people.

Kyoko Katsuki, an expert from JICA, helped establish a program to develop skilled trainers who could provide advice and instruction to those involved in rehabilitation and reintegration efforts. Among the many courses held as part of the program, one on victim counseling seemed to resonate the most with the participants. The course instructor stressed the importance of victims' deciding their own next steps and described the role of counselors as helping them make the best choices by assisting in identifying problems and providing information. "Until now I have only listened to what victims have to say," says a police officer who took part in the class. "From here on out I want to provide them with information that will help to ease their concerns."

Myanmar also has a need for reintegration programs that promote economic opportunities for trafficking victims. JICA is currently establishing an information center in the city of Yangon that will enable victims to find steady work and support themselves after returning home. Looking farther ahead, JICA will continue addressing human trafficking issues by strengthening cooperation with GMS countries.

Participants at a training course discuss the needs of victims and ways of providing support.





Japanese Know-how Supporting Angolan Mothers and Children

fter a long civil war, Angola has been enjoying continued growth. However, access to healthcare services, a fundamental human need, is still insufficient. As part of efforts to improve this situation, Angola has adopted the Japanese "maternal and child health handbook" system to protect the health of pregnant women and children. Angolan authorities are now working to encourage wider usage of the handbooks.

MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH A SERIOUS ISSUE

Angola's civil war lasted 27 years following the country's declaration of independence from colonial rule until the 2002 ceasefire. However, even a decade later, Angola's health indicators remained poor. At this point Japan started offering support to enhance healthcare by building medical facilities and training doctors, nurses, and other medical workers. Adding South-South cooperation to these activities, Brazil has been a strong partner to Japan, leveraging its experience of overcoming similar issues and its shared language of Portuguese with Angola.

The country faces various health problems, but maternal and child health is a particularly serious issue in Angola. The maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births) was 450 in 2010, compared with just 4.1 for Japan, while the infant mortality rate for children who die before age five (per 1,000 live births) in 2011 was 158, the eighth highest worldwide. Giving birth carries a serious risk of fatality for women, and children's health faces constant threats.

INTRODUCTION OF HANDBOOKS

One factor behind these dire statistics is the lack of a system to manage the health of pregnant women and young children on an ongoing basis. There were prenatal handbooks for recording details of checkups before birth and child health cards for



Mothers line up to have their children immunized (above). Committee members discuss the content of the maternal and child health handbook.



vaccination records and growth monitoring, but many mothers threw the prenatal handbooks away after birth, thinking that they only needed the child health cards. If health conditions of mother and child before and after birth are regularly recorded in an integrated tool, medical workers can put this information to use in the early detection of health problems and the risks involved. But awareness of these benefits was not yet common in Angola.

To change the situation for the better, Angola is introducing a system of maternal and child health handbooks referring to the Japanese experience. A JICA team of Japanese specialists is working with Angola Ministry of Health personnel to improve this system. Members of the Japanese NGO Health and Development Service (HANDS) are involved in these activities, particularly Toru Sadamori, who has many years' experience of helping children with HIV infections and AIDS in Brazil, and Tomoyo Wada, who has provided support for maternal and child health in Mexico.

Dr. António Costa, director for human resources at the Angolan Ministry of Health, first made the proposal to use maternal and child health handbooks. He learned of the handbooks while participating in training in Japan and was fascinated by their inclusion of information from pregnancy until the child becomes five years old. "I felt that if we had them in Angola, we could protect the health of mothers and children," he remembers.

TARGETING A CHANGE OF THINKING

The first stage was to form the Maternal and Child Health Handbook Committee with members from the Ministry of Health; the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF, and other international organizations active locally; and local bodies including the Angolan Pediatric Society. The committee designed the Angolan maternal and child health handbook based on the prenatal handbook and child health card currently in use, UNICEF educational materials, Ministry of Health documents, and other materials.

A year of discussion led to completion of a trial version. According to Sadamori: "My colleagues at the Ministry of Health told me, 'We don't want money; we want to learn knowledge and skills.' I could sense they would do anything necessary to make things better." With the handbook in his hands, Dr. Costa displayed his determination. "I want to spread usage of this maternal and child health handbook further throughout Angola."

The next stage is to instruct health professionals in how to use the handbooks and conduct a trial distribution to mothers in the capital, Luanda. Based on feedback from users, the committee plans to improve the handbook. In Angola, childbirth and raising children are traditionally thought of as women's work only; one of the project's aims is to change this way of thinking by encouraging fathers to play a more active role through widespread use of the handbooks. Project members from Angola, Brazil, and Japan are looking forward to a day when handbooks in all Angolan households improve the safety of mothers and children nationwide.



Specialists from Brazil provide instruction in medical techniques. Brazil has been an important partner in helping promote the handbook.

Women Guiding Their Own Future





ikirte Addis Tedla's dramatic transition from child psychologist to fashion designer was motivated by the problem of young women in her native Ethiopia being used as cheap labor in textile and other factories. According to Fikirte, the issue has a simple solution: "Factories wouldn't have to rely on child labor if clothing companies would pay a proper wage to have their products made."

Fikirte, deeply interested in fashion design ever since high school, opened her own company, Yefikir Design, in 2009. Her creations, which are manufactured by local women, combine modern design with elements of traditional Ethiopian ethnic attire. Being involved in the clothing production process allows employees to raise their children while they earn money and learn design; the result, of course, is a better quality of life. Fikirte's efforts to raise the standard of living for women have been bolstered by the high praise her brand has gained in New York, Paris, and other fashion centers.

In February 2014, Fikirte participated with other women entrepreneurs from Japan and Africa in a seminar cohosted by JICA and the city of Yokohama entitled "Empowerment of Women Through Entrepreneurship." Participants discussed various projects and policies in place in Japan to promote and support entrepreneurship among local women. After returning to Ethiopia, Fikirte began applying what she learned in Japan to create training programs for women entrepreneurs in her homeland. "I found that to succeed as an entrepreneur you must maintain a commitment

and continually strive to improve your product," says Fikirte. "Ethiopia abounds with unique and beautiful customs that I would like to share with the world. I am hopeful that through my ef-

Fashion as a Force for Change Fikirte Addis Tedla, Fashion Designer, Yefikir Design, Ethiopia forts, the coming decades will see women playing a larger role in Ethiopian society." Using her knowledge gained in Japan, Fikirte continues to work

to empower women in her native land.

Teaching Skills to Build a Brighter Future Asia Jabeen, Architecture Department, Government College of Technology–Railway Road, Lahore, Pakistan

isitors to the Government College of Technology in Pakistan's northeastern city of Lahore will be greeted by a scene they may not have expected—female students dressed in flowing traditional garb and safety helmets, diligently practicing skills and techniques learned during their architectural studies.

The Government College's architecture department is the first at any public school in Pakistan to open courses to both men and women students. When JICA architecture expert Minoru Ito, who came to the college as part of a project to improve educational content, first put forward the idea of opening courses to women, architecture instructor Asia Jabeen immediately voiced her approval. Career choices for women in Pakistan are often limited to positions as public servants or nurses. In the last few years, though, the architecture industry has begun to open up to female workers. Behind this development is economic growth: as the country's construction industry continues to thrive, the demand for workers—including women—is on the rise. "Women who come from families with limited incomes can keep costs down by attending a trade school like this one," says Jabeen. "Having women apply the skills they learn to get highpaying jobs in the construction industry is an important step in reducing poverty." After graduating with a master's degree in architecture from the University of Engineering and Technology of Lahore, Jabeen gained experience working at an architecture company before coming to the college. She hopes that her students will follow in her footsteps, using what they learn to build new futures for themselves.

When a bomb went off at a railroad station near the college as part of the political unrest that afflicts Pakistan, administrators considered closing the course to female students. Jabeen was adamantly against this proposal, pronouncing that she would do everything in her power to protect the students. A total of 104 female students have joined the architecture program in the three years since it opened in 2010, and Jabeen firmly believes these students, and other women like them, will become forces for change in society.



Using Local Color to Enrich Lives Elena Chiquival, Coordinator for Women's Consortium, Santiago Atitlán, Guatemala tion in a

long the shores of beautiful Lake Atitlán in Guatemala are rows of vibrantly dyed cloth hanging in the sun. This colorful fabric, a specialty in this traditional land of the Mayans, is the means by which Elena Chiquival endeavors to improve the livelihood of women in the region.

At present, Chiquival has created 13 women's groups where she teaches weaving techniques with an eye to creating products that will have a strong market appeal. "Many women haven't had the opportunity to receive an education," says Chiquival. "By helping them to make high-quality goods that can be sold at a premium, I'm aiming to improve life for local women."

Chiquival traces the genesis of her activities back to participa-

tion in a 2007 training program in Japan, where she learned about the post-World War II movement to improve the livelihood of residents in rural areas of the country. Seeing how women in farming built ways to improve their livelihood was an eyeopener for Chiquival. Reflecting on her experience, she says, "I learned the importance of being involved locally in matters that affect you. You shouldn't wait for a handout, but should rather set out on your own to create something of value."

Soon after returning to Guatemala, she began discussing her ideas in earnest with other women in the region. Seeing how chemically based dyes faded easily, the group decided to make products from local, naturally dyed cloth. Chiquival's eyes brighten when talking about the project, showing the obvious pride she feels. "As part of our marketing, we gauge what designs and colors people will like. Our goal is to make products that have a wide appeal."

Toward Gender Equality: Progress and Challenges

Shireen Lateef Senior Advisor (Gender), Asian Development Bank

Next year, 2015, marks 20 years since the United Nations held its fourth World Conference on Women, unanimously adopting the landmark Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA) for women's advancement and empowerment. Coincidentally, 2015 also marks the target year for meeting the globally endorsed Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The third MDG, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, is the explicit gender equality goal. How far have we come on delivering the promises made in the BPFA and the MDGs to improve the lives of women and girls?

The Asia-Pacific region has made impressive strides over the last two decades. Today we have more

girls in schools, fewer women dying in childbirth, more women in wage employment outside agriculture, and more women in national parliaments and decisionmaking bodies. Today the region is certainly a better place for women and girls.

Tasks Remain to Tackle

As we approach 2015, the region can celebrate moving the gender equality agenda forward. But while progress is noted, much more remains to be done. We still have too many women dying in childbirth; too many women and girls suffering from malnutrition; too many women without jobs and incomes; too many girls not completing secondary education; and too many women subjected to genderbased violence. The Asia-Pacific region has some of the worst gender indicators in the world, especially "missing girls," honor killings, dowry deaths, early and child marriage, gender-based violence, and trafficking of women and girls. The gen-

der equality agenda remains unfinished business.

JICA's development assistance has undoubtedly made a significant contribution to the region's success in narrowing gender gaps. JICA has helped to reduce gender gaps in education; built hospitals and trained health workers to deliver critical health services for women and children; supported income-earning opportunities; installed water supply in rural areas to reduce women's time poverty and improve health; and, through humanitarian and disaster-relief programs, helped to cushion the impact of shocks and disasters on women and their families.

It is encouraging to see that JICA is also tackling some of the more difficult and sensitive regional issues, such as trafficking of women and girls. With increasing globalization, improving physical connectivity, and greater movement of people across borders, the potential grows for increased trafficking. JICA is strengthening collaboration among Mekong countries to take a coordinated and unified approach to tackling this risk.

The Potential of Greater Gender Focus

Much of JICA's assistance for gender equality has been through bilateral grant assistance. In contrast, JICA's lending is directed at

infrastructure development. Moving forward, JICA might consider forging closer synergies between the lending and grant programs. Making infrastructure work better for women and girls could be given more prominence in JICA's lending program. Rural roads, water supply and sanitation, urban mass transit, rural electrification, and urban development programs can go a long way toward improving and providing faster, easier access to schools, hospitals, and markets for women and girls; reducing women's time poverty; improving access to jobs and income earning opportunities; and supporting women's physical mobility and ensuring the safety and security of public transport systems. Indeed, infrastructure is not gender neutral.

About 18 months ago, JICA's gender team invited me to Tokyo to deliver a presentation on designing more genderinclusive infrastructure projects. I was pleasantly surprised by the large number of JICA staff (mostly engineers and men) who attended. Some were surprised that

the Asian Development Bank's infrastructure lending integrates gender equality concerns. JICA is encouraged to take up the challenge of designing and implementing more gender-inclusive infrastructure projects in its lending portfolio. Some of the ADB's experiences and lessons can be drawn upon; joint gender capacity building for staff in this area could be considered. While direct support for women's projects is needed to close remaining gender gaps, a dual approach of targeted projects and gender mainstreaming across all projects and programs is required to fasttrack and accelerate progress on gender equality.

TRENDS



Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Agriculture





Improving Food and Nutrition Education in Ghana





Stakeholders in Peace Agreement Gather in Hiroshima



n Kenya, women provide 70% or more of agricultural labor. Despite doing the lion's share of work, women struggle to earn a living from farming. Gender-based barriers like limited access to land and agricultural materials, as well as inadequate opportunities to learn new farming techniques and difficulties in bringing crops to market, keep incomes down. According to a World Bank survey, among the poorest farmers, women still only earn half of what their male counterparts do.

To address this issue, JICA, together with the Kenyan agricultural ministry, is starting a project in September 2014 to improve farmers' livelihoods by promoting gender equality in agriculture.

Efforts are being made to promote gender-equal farm management.

n Ghana, the effects of malnutrition on childhood development have become a serious concern. JICA, as part of efforts to support the government's creation of an action plan, hosted training sessions on June 16-26 that brought together members of Ghana's government ministries and a commission and representatives from NGOs and other Japanese organizations involved in dietary improvement efforts.

In Japan, *shokuiku*, or food and nutrition education, is offered to every level of society by both public and private-sector organizations. The JICA-sponsored training program looked to apply Japan's *shokuiku* knowledge in helping

Participants visit a major Japanese food manufacturer that produces a supplement to improve nutritional balance of weaning foods in Ghana.

n March 27, 2014, a peace agreement ended 40 years of fighting on the southern Philippine island of Mindanao between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the government. JICA, which had supported the peace process, hosted the seminar Consolidation for Peace for Mindanao on June 23-25 in Hiroshima. The seminar brought together stakeholders to discuss issues and policies toward inauguration of an autonomous Bangsamoro government. They adopted the Hiroshima Declaration, which includes a clause on gender-responsive governance to provide women with opportunities.

Co-hosted by JICA and the University of Sains Malaysia, the seminar is a platform for

Philippine President Aquino (left) and Chairman Murad at the seminar Consolidation for Peace for Mindanao.

The new project focuses on increasing gender equality and looks to strengthen the role of women in agriculture. This is expected to facilitate effective farm management, agricultural profitability, and livelihood improvement. Worldwide experience has shown that women's active participation in farm management enhances effective and efficient economic performance in agriculture through the efficient utilization of agricultural inputs and the integration of knowledge and experience accumulated by women. Women's economic empowerment and gender-equal farm management also contribute to family well-being.

JICA hopes the accomplishments of this new project will help to bolster its efforts to mainstream gender-equal perspectives in other operations for agricultural development across the African continent.

Ghana to create effective nutritional policies. Participants learned about dietary improvement efforts in Japan and Japanese-government-run food and nutrition education programs.

As part of the project, participants visited Keisen University, which runs a compulsory "farm for education" horticulture course. Participants experienced organic farming firsthand at the school's agricultural facilities. One participant noted: "Experiencing the entire farming process from planting seeds to consuming what is grown gives those involved a new appreciation of the food they eat." Participants also visited a major food and beverage manufacturer, local health authorities, and the Japanese Dietetic Association to increase their understanding.

JICA is considering including dietary programs in its efforts to improve mother and child health in Ghana.

dialogue between all parties involved in the peace process. This was the first time for the seminar to be held in Japan.

At the seminar, Philippine President Benigno Simeon C. Aquino III expressed gratitude for the international community's mediation. After this, President Aquino firmly shook hands with MILF Chairman Al-Hajj Murad Ebrahim and Peace Panel chair Mohagher Iqbal.

Prior to the peace agreement, JICA had since 2003 provided assistance in the region, such as small-scale infrastructure improvements and assistance in poverty reduction. Since 2013, JICA has provided support to the fledgling Bangsamoro government in creating systems and institutions, developing human resources, and designing regional development plans. JICA remains actively involved in promoting peace in Mindanao.



Yumiko Tanaka

JICA Senior Advisor on Gender and Development



Yumiko Tanaka worked at the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) from 1983 to 1990, focusing on gender and development in the Asia-Pacific region. There she organized regional ministerial summits and international conferences to help governments in the region strengthen programs addressing issues affecting women, such as increased participation in the political process, economic empowerment, and violence prevention.

After joining JICA, Tanaka began to focus not just on the Asia-Pacific, but Africa, Central and South America, the Middle East, and other regions around the world. One experience which left a strong impression was a 1994-96 forest preservation and rural community development project in Nepal. "I stayed with a local family and experienced the culture and way of life first hand," says Tanaka. "Seeing what life was like for women living in poverty had a huge influence on my work."

Tanaka visited Afghanistan yearly from 2002 to 2008 as part of an aid project for impoverished women. She lived in Thailand in 2005-8 and later began a project to combat human trafficking in Thailand, Myanmar, and Viet Nam (pp. 8-9). She still monitors projects in the Mekong region and is eager to re-create the results. "I hope to extend the successes achieved in these three countries throughout South and Southeast Asia."

Tanaka has also been involved in projects concerning gender in Cambodia, Tanzania, and other countries, and is aiming to increase gender awareness in Japan as well. "I would like to help all Japan's international cooperative organizations, not just JICA, to consider gender as well as social diversity, such as for those with disabilities, the elderly, children, and minorities, when conducting activities."

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Cover: Women attend a JICA training course in Syria. (PHOTO: © SANAE NUMATA) Photo on pages 2-3: A girl collects fallen branches along the roadside in Bangladesh. (PHOTO: © ATSUSHI

SHIBUYA)



The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) is the world's largest bilateral development organization, operating in some 150 countries to help some of the globe's most vulnerable people.