

Gender 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

