

# Voices

F R O M   T H E   F I E L D

## 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  
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**Photo on pages 2-3:**  
A girl collects fallen  
branches along the  
roadside in Bangladesh.  
(PHOTO: © ATSUSHI  
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