

# JICA's WORLD

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## Gender Issues in Conflict and Disaster

Supporting the weak and vulnerable in our society



## DISASTERS REVEAL SOCIAL INEQUITIES

Whether in natural or man-made crises, women often face risks that men do not. Sexual assault on women has been a part of war everywhere in the world throughout history. During the civil war in Yugoslavia in the 1990s, sexual assault on women was part of the “ethnic cleansing” war strategy.

Women’s vulnerability is revealed in a different way in natural disasters. The Japanese term “ashiyowa” (weak feet, or slow walker) figuratively refers to women, children, and elderly people, and suggests that they are physically less capable of avoiding risks than men. When disaster strikes, women are more likely than men to become victims because they are often less informed about how to evacuate, are not socially allowed to evacuate of their own will, or are literally “slow walkers.”

Although women constitute half of the world’s population, they are perceived as weaker than men in many societies, and such perception has often resulted in gender inequality. Such social distortion causes discrimination in everyday life, but it is even more visible in a time of crisis.

In 2000, the UN Security Council adopted resolution 1325

to highlight the magnitude of the adverse impact of conflicts on women and children, as well as the importance of women’s role in peace-building. The resolution emphasizes the importance of women’s participation in decision-making not only for building peace and security but also for preventing conflict.

Women’s participation in conflict and disaster prevention is a common agenda for all nations. “Crises often reveal social distortions that are unseen in normal times, exposing inequities and discrimination,” suggests Ms. Akiko Domoto, a former member of the House of Councilors. “Eliminating inequities for women in a time of disaster or conflict requires thinking about our society in normal times,” she says. Ms. Domoto has long been committed to establishing systems to promote women’s social participation.

## TAPPING THE VULNERABLE TO BUILD A MORE ROBUST SOCIETY

Why is the involvement of women, and eventually minorities such as older people and people with disabilities, beneficial for peace-building and disaster prevention? Such people can offer different perspectives, and their insights can help

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build a more robust society.

Ms. Domoto says that Japan rarely includes women in decision-making forums for disaster prevention or recovery planning. "It's because people think that it is 'strong men's job' to stand against disaster," she says. "Therefore, when the Great East Japan Earthquake hit, it was difficult to persuade people of the importance of ensuring privacy using partitions, which is absolutely necessary when changing clothes or diapers." She says that similar issues have been discussed since the Great Hanshin Awaji Earthquake in 1995, but the same problem happened again after last year's Kumamoto Earthquake.

But there are signs of improvement. "On the other hand, many women are now actively engaged in efforts to rebuild their communities after the Great East Japan Earthquake," Ms. Domoto says. She explains that women are as capable as men in crises, but that they are often not viewed that way. There are also signs of change beyond Japan. For example, in Bangladesh during the 1970s, the male-female ratio of cyclone victims was 1 to 14. This happened because women at that time tended to stay at home and were socially isolated, and

consequently they remained uninformed about the need to evacuate as soon as they heard the evacuation alarm, or they did not know where to escape to. Bangladesh undertook initiatives to promote women's knowledge about evacuation as well as to improve technologies to predict disasters. Such efforts not only decreased the number of victims but also improved the male-female ratio of cyclone victims, which in 2007 was 1 to 5.

Women are not the only vulnerable people who should be heard. "There are children, elderly people, and people with health problems and disabilities, who are, in other words, the weak or minorities in many different ways," Ms. Domoto says. "If we do not include viewpoints offered by such people into decision-making, vulnerable people will continue to suffer disproportionately in crises."

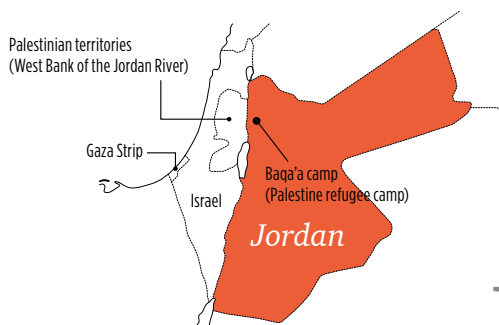
When the weak are not left behind in a society, the society is safer for all. To build a society with less distortion and to keep it in good shape, it is essential for us all to speak out and support each other, regardless of gender or age, pursuing a society that is open and comfortable for all.







The DPA Trainer (center) and participants in the entrepreneur training course. Taking into account cultural restrictions that make it difficult for women to be away from the home for more than a day, JICA designed each training session so that it can be completed in one day.



## Finding New Ways for Women Refugees to Work

In Arabic societies, both men and women have negative feelings about women working outside the home. In increasingly impoverished Palestine refugee camps, JICA is helping promote new ways to expand women's possibilities and improve their livelihoods while respecting long-held cultural norms.



Market in the Baqa'a camp, lined with stores run by the refugees themselves.

### IS IT A SHAME IF A WOMAN WORKS? POVERTY IS BECOMING MORE SEVERE IN REFUGEE CAMPS

This is not just a camp—it is a town. The road, about 20 km north of Amman, the capital of Jordan, feels like an ordinary road, but it is inside the Baqa'a camp where Palestine refugees live. With barbers and clothes shops run by refugees themselves, the market street is crowded.

There is no physical border dividing “inside” and “outside” of the camp. However, the density of old buildings and the littered alleys wet with rain or domestic wastewater make it look a little different from the townscape seen before entering the camp.

The number of Palestinians in Jordan who are registered as refugees by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was approximately 2.25 million as of January 2016. In the Baqa'a camp, which was established in 1968, approximately 128,000 people are currently living in an area of only 1.5 square kilometers.

The lives of the refugees here are difficult. Compared with other Palestine refugee camps in Jordan, the Baqa'a camp has especially high poverty and unemployment rates. People desperately need to participate in economic activities and secure stable incomes.

Opportunities for women to earn cash income are particularly limited, because it is considered a shame for women to work outside the home in many Arabic societies, including Palestine. “In their culture, both men and women generally consider it embarrassing if a wife is gainfully employed, because it means that the husband fails to make enough money,” explains a JICA expert who works on a gender and social disparity project in Jordan. “Therefore, men don't approve of their wives and daughters being employed, and women hesitate to work.”

JICA began supporting refugee women in cooperation with the Department for Palestinian Affairs (DPA), part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Jordan, in 2006. The DPA operates training and employment centers for women in four Palestine refugee camps in Jordan including Baqa'a. JICA cooperates in reviewing the curriculum and helping train the staff. During activities, it became apparent that there is a lot of social prejudice against women working outside the home. And in 2009, JICA initiated a project to enhance opportunities for women to earn cash income

and to encourage refugees in the camps to consider different perspectives on women's employment.

### SKILLS FOR WOMEN CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF MEN AND SOCIETY

Five Palestine refugee women look cheerful while taking notes around a table on which pans, scales, and various liquids have been placed. “How much should we price the sample?” They are learning how to make body cream under the guidance of a female staff member of the DPA.

In less than two hours, the table fills with different kinds of cream. They enjoy checking how each one smells and feels. Everyone seems happy with the results.

This is an example of an entrepreneur training course for married women who have difficulties in working outside the home. The DPA ran classes like this at the training and employment center in the Baqa'a camp in mid-January this year. The training is intended to enable women to earn income by making simple products at home without going out to work.

“Among the refugees in the camp, women, particularly from households with economic difficulties, are selected as participants. Compared with men, the refugee women have fewer employment opportunities and less education,” says Mamoun Alghol, who supervises the Baqa'a camp where 128,000 refugees reside. He is also a lecturer at the training and employment center, where he helps women acquire skills.

When it began in 2009, the training program in the first two phases of the project was financially supported by JICA, but the current, third phase is run by the DPA without any financial aid. This elevates the sense of ownership and mission among those who are engaged in the project.

In addition to entrepreneur support, in phase II, JICA began promoting education to change negative

#### Palestine refugees

Palestine refugees are those who were forced to evacuate from Palestine (including all of Israel, the West Bank of the Jordan River, and the Gaza Strip) between June 1946 and May 1948 because of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War as well as their descendants. The UNRWA was established in 1949 to relieve Palestine refugees from starvation and poverty.



Speaking about perception changes regarding women's employment, Mamoun of the DPA says, “We expect that appealing to married women and their families will have a positive effect on children.”



## Gender Issues in Conflict and Disaster : JORDAN

attitudes towards women's employment. Workshops are regularly held in the Baqa'a camp under titles such as "Is it a shame for a woman to work outside the home?" and "Does Islam allow women to work outside?" Around 1800 refugees have participated in these workshops.

However, some older men tend to insist, "I agree with the idea of getting rid of a sense of shame about women's employment, but I wouldn't approve of my own wife working at a factory or somewhere," which often causes an argument with the DPA lecturers. The presence of Mamoun is very important because he, as a man, promotes women's employment outside the home.

JICA's gender expert points out, "In Arabic societies, a woman can be employed only when approved

A man is participating in a workshop that encourages participants to notice their unconscious gender discrimination and prejudice.



by a man: husband, father, or brother. Therefore, it is necessary to take a long-term view of promoting behavior change, involving those who are influential in the community, including older men."



A female DPA member gives a lecture at a workshop. It is not easy for a young woman to speak about women's social participation in front of older men, but her confidence builds up as she gives more lectures.

### "I SUPPORT THE FAMILY FINANCES" RESPECT FOR WOMEN'S WILLINGNESS TO WORK

Fatmeh Abu Safieh, a mother of five children, has been making and selling perfume, soap, and detergent at home in the camp to support the family finances since 2012, when she participated in the entrepreneur training course. She says, "I went home to sell the perfume that I made in my first training session, and it sold out instantly. With connections from my relatives, I have gained many customers outside the camp as well. As I can work from home, my husband is agreeable with that."

Her husband, also a refugee, does not have work-

Fatmeh makes perfume on the spot. The profit is about 60% of the regular price. Her two daughters are interested in beauty and sewing businesses and now participate in the camp's vocational training.



permit and is therefore unable to work. Two years ago, he suffered a heart attack and still needs medical treatment at the hospital. "I am the mainstay of the family. The cost of living is at least 450 U.S. dollars a month including the rent," Fatmeh says. "The more the children grow, the more it will cost, and we have to pay the medical fees of my husband, too. But even though our life is tough, the fact that I can work improves my self-esteem."

Although Fatmeh is modest, her business sense and ambition are clear: "I need to enhance my marketing in the future. I wish JICA established a store in the camp and supported sales promotion."

In another Palestine refugee camp, there is a woman who attended a similar entrepreneur training course and eventually opened a beauty salon with co-operation from her family. How many more women are there who are talented but not allowed to take a chance?

Mamoun has been appealing to the refugees in the camp to sweep away prejudice against women's employment. He emphasizes, "I wish that women would be able to work at will and earn income to buy what they need for daily living, and that the living standards in the camp would improve."

As the Baqa'a camp has a history of nearly 50 years, many of the refugees were born here, and Fatmeh is one of them. Support is provided not only because she is a poor refugee woman, but also because she is a human being. It is important to make sure that her opportunities are not limited just because she is a woman.

## A NEW ATTEMPT TO PROTECT MOTHERS AND CHILDREN: ANOTHER TYPE OF SUPPORT FOR REFUGEE WOMEN

In Jordan, JICA also supports Palestine refugees through an initiative on maternal and child health. JICA started making a Palestinian version of a mother and child health handbook in 2005, and three years later, it distributed the completed handbook in Arabic throughout Palestine. In addition to the Palestine territories in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank of the Jordan River, the mother and child health handbook has also been distributed in Palestine refugee camps in Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon through United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) clinics. For more effective dissemination, JICA worked on an electronic version of the handbook.

Why digitize the mother and child health handbook, when it already exists on paper? Akihiro Seit, Director of UNRWA's health program, explains, "When the mother and child health handbook is digitized, even those who have been uprooted, such as refugees, will be able to continue their children's medical care with only one cell phone application wherever they are. In addition, anyone can use a phone application easily, so fathers will be able to use it and be more involved with mother and child health."

Now that the development of the cell phone application is complete, and it has been available for Palestine refugee mothers to download since April this year. The largest issue was how to add extra value through digitization. Omar Al-Asseh, who engaged

in the development of the IT system for the app says, "Besides notification about vaccinations and outpatient appointments, there are functions for nutrition and breastfeeding instructions and lullabies."

In order to improve refugees' maternal and child health, it is crucial that every mother have access to the mother and child health handbook. Therefore, instead of replacing the paper copies with the digitized version, both formats will be available, each with its respective advantages – the portability of the app, and the familiarity of the book.

Women who are forced to live as refugees must receive support so that they will not lose their free will and precious children on top of losing their homeland. A refugee can be a mother with a happy family, and she can even be an entrepreneur. JICA's assistance aims to help in both areas.



Many refugees now have access to smartphones and the Internet. Seit, expects that applications helpful to refugees will become widespread. Long-term solutions require more than technology – he emphasizes the importance of understanding the root causes of displacement and refugee camps: "Humans can never be healthy unless society is healthy."



Omar is developing an IT system to digitize the mother and child health handbook. JICA and UNRWA survey the women at the refugee camp and discuss with them what features and information are important to them.

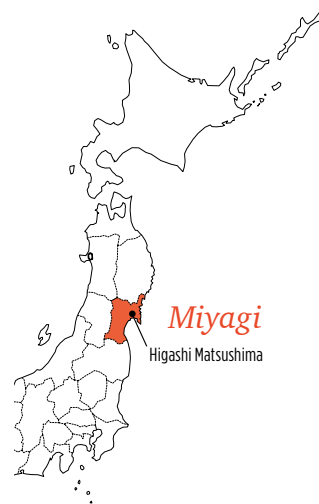


Higashi Matsushima residents show the progress they have made so far, with pictures taken immediately after the earthquake and a recovery plan map.

Sorting disaster debris. This project employs women who were not working before and people who lost their jobs in the disaster.  
(Photo: Higashi Matsushima)



Women in the Nobiru district grow herbs as part of a local-products project. They sometimes host Indonesian participants through JICA's grass-roots project.



## Women Planning Together, Learning from One Another

**D**isaster recovery and gender issues are often intertwined. As Japanese cities devastated by the Great East Japan Earthquake continue to rebuild, their residents find empowerment in sharing the lessons they have learned. In December of 2016, Higashi Matsushima in Miyagi Prefecture hosted a forum for local residents and JICA participants from other countries that have experienced natural disasters. The forum highlighted the importance of considering both women's strengths and vulnerabilities in the aftermath of a disaster.

### JICA PARTICIPANTS VISITED THE NOBIRU CIVIC CENTER

The tsunami caused by the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011 flooded 65% of Higashi Matsushima's central area facing Ishinomaki Bay. Over 5,500 buildings and houses were destroyed, and 3% of the city's population died or went missing. Six years on, as part of an effort to speed up reconstruction of residential areas and relocate residents en masse, Higashi Matsushima is advancing a project to accelerate collective relocation for disaster prevention. This project is creating new communities in safer locations.

The largest among these relocated communities is the Nobiru North Hill District in the western part





Participants listen intently to the residents. It was a rare opportunity for them to hear firsthand experiences.

of the city. The district is located on a leveled hillside on high ground. Nobiru station of the JR Senseki Line, which was destroyed by the tsunami, has been moved to this area. Construction of houses for relocated residents began last summer.

As part of the residential area development, the Nobiru Civic Center opened here in November of 2016. And in December, 17 government officials and members of non-governmental organizations working in disaster prevention and gender issues visited the center. Representing six countries including Nepal and Pakistan, they were participants in a Knowledge Co-Creation Program called Gender and Diversity in Disaster Risk Reduction, a program that has been run by JICA since 2015. As part of the program, the participants joined a forum to exchange opinions with residents of Higashi Matsushima.

Women face particular problems after a disaster, not only in developing countries but also in Japan. For example, violence against women occurred in evacuation shelters and temporary housing facilities after the Great East Japan Earthquake. In areas where many people have traditional values and are not receptive to women working outside the home, young single mothers have often found themselves alienated economically and socially. This forum provided a venue for people from developing countries and Japan to share their experiences, with a focus on finding ways to include women's perspectives in a search for solutions to disaster-related challenges.

### LIVELY DISCUSSION LEADS TO A CHANGE IN RESIDENTS' AWARENESS

At the forum, JICA participants and local Japanese community members split into discussion groups. The visitors raised questions such as, "How did Higashi Matsushima residents and the city build consensus over the relocation to higher ground?" One participant observed, "In Pakistan, even if the government makes a relocation plan for a disaster-affected area, many choose to stay where they live because of their ancestors or jobs."

Another participant said, "Sri Lanka has experienced natural disasters and conflict, and the frequency of sexual assaults and the number of single mothers are growing – these are serious problems. In Japan, how do you incorporate women's safety and security into disaster prevention plans?"

In response, local residents including primary

school teachers, firefighters, and members of the Nobiru Community Development Council shared their own experiences. For instance, to build consensus, they said that they had made an effort to hear from as many people as possible, assigning a coordinator to each temporary housing facility to collect the residents' opinions while holding community meetings as well. Although the community meetings had no women attending at first, the groups reached out to the community to actively encourage women to participate. As a result, at some local community meetings, women now constitute over 40% of attendants and it is easier to understand and respond to their needs.

The council members sometimes learn indirectly about the needs of those who find it difficult to join the meetings, such as persons with disabilities. "One time, a boy asked me how women in wheelchairs could evacuate in a disaster," a council member said. "So I brought this up at the next meeting, and we created an evacuation route for people in wheelchairs."

"Hearing their stories is quite helpful to figuring out how to better address gender issues in the recovery process," a female Sri Lankan participant said smilingly after the discussion. One male participant from Bhutan said, "This talk has reaffirmed the importance for me of women's roles. I was especially impressed to hear how women in the affected area were involved in a project to sort and recycle most of the debris from collapsed buildings."

On the other side of the discussions, Keiko Sakurai, Vice-President of the Nobiru Community Development Council, participated in the forum as a member of the resident group. She said, "I was surprised to know that women's social participation rate is higher in the participants' countries than in Japan. I am the only female board member on the council, and I realized that we could do better." Forum coordinator Rie Fusamae of IC Net Co., Ltd., a consulting firm that provides technical assistance to developing countries suggested, "Some participants are from countries where gender equality efforts are more advanced than in Japan. So I believe that the visiting participants also offered some insights to the residents."

"The city of Higashi Matsushima conducts various international cooperation activities other than this forum," said Midori Kamada from the JICA Tohoku Office, which organized the forum. "We believe that interaction with people from overseas, including disaster-affected areas, gives Higashi Matsushima residents a sense of togetherness and encourages them to strive for recovery." She said that the residents gained new ideas for regional revitalization from foreign visitors.

"In the future, I think there will be more and more international cooperation projects like this one, in which members of local communities in Japan and developing countries learn from each other, building relationships that lead to the creation of new ideas," she said.

This forum forged new cooperative relationships between residents of different disaster-affected areas. In the future, such relationships will serve as a driving force to further promote social participation of women in times of disaster.



A community workshop for reconstruction planning was held after the earthquake at an evacuation center. Many women participated in the workshop.

(Photo: Higashi Matsushima)

# Empowering Women for Equitable, Peaceful, and Sustainable Society



As part of Japan's 2015 National Action Plan for Women, Peace, and Security, the government of Japan is committed to including women's perspectives in its development of policies and initiatives. One area of focus is how women are impacted by, and can meaningfully participate in, reconstruction from conflicts and natural disasters. JICA conducted a four-country joint study with the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security to assess the needs of women in post-disaster and post-conflict recovery areas and the effectiveness of past aid deployments.

## THE NEED TO GIVE HIGHER PRIORITY TO WOMEN'S NEEDS AND RISKS

The first United Nations Security Council Resolution to define women's roles in peacebuilding and national security was adopted in 2000 – an international milestone in gender equality initiatives. Recognizing the gender-specific nature of violence which women often suffer in conflict situations, Resolution 1325 calls for all parties to incorporate gender perspectives and women's needs into conflict resolution, prevention, protection, and post-conflict reconstruction.

In response, more than 60 countries formulated national action plans. Japan formulated its action plan in 2015.

## INCOME OPPORTUNITY



In the Philippines, JICA helps local women to sell fish products they make. The income the women make encourages them to be self-reliant.

## WOMEN FRIENDLY SPACE



The United Nations Population Fund built a Women Friendly Space where women can talk freely about, and receive advice on, issues they usually don't feel comfortable discussing.

To better understand the current situation and identify gender-specific issues in disaster risk reduction and peacebuilding, JICA conducted a joint study in collaboration with the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security in Washington D.C.. The research was conducted in four countries: Haiti, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, and Afghanistan. The Georgetown Institute conducted research in Haiti, a small country that is located in the Caribbean Sea and that is geographically close to the US, and JICA conducted field surveys in the other three countries.

Yumiko Tanaka, Senior Gender Advisor to JICA and a member of the joint research team, explained some of the international differences she found. "There is a large differ-





A hazard map is prepared as a result of a fruitful discussion in the community.

#### HAZARD MAP

ence between Japan and other countries in the perception of challenges related to gender equality in natural disasters. There are not as many natural disasters such as earthquakes and typhoon in Europe as there are in Asia. Therefore, people in Europe tend to pay more attention to environmental and climate change issues. In the US, there are many studies on gender and peace-building, but there is less interest in natural disasters from the gender perspective,” she explains. “On the other hand, in Japan, it has become conventional wisdom that women suffer more than men during natural disasters. For example, there were reports of higher death rates among females than among males and increased sexual violence against women during the Great Hanshin Awaji Earthquake in 1995. Despite this information, during the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011, this awareness was not fully utilized. We should therefore work to act on such information.”

Asia, including Japan, is a region that is particularly prone to natural disasters. Sri Lanka suffered tremendous damage from the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami. The southern part of the country has a high risk of landslides. After the 2004 disaster, JICA provided assistance with resettlement housing in the disaster-stricken areas. JICA also implemented a micro-financing program for women. The joint study aimed to examine the effectiveness of such assistance.

Tanaka says that although both the Philippines and Sri Lanka have national action plans for natural disaster risk management that take into account socially vulnerable people including women, in reality, adequate protection and involvement have not been achieved. “This is due to a lack of funds at the regional level as well as a lack of involvement of women in the decision-making process,” she explains. “In deeper rural areas, women are more bounded by home and family chores.” In Sri Lanka, one of the loan conditions of micro-financing was that women should work for their families, but in many cases, the borrowed money was used up by their male family members. Research results revealed that the strong perception that women exist for their family members prevents the project from empowering women.

#### LISTENING TO VOICES FROM THE BOTTOM OF THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Makiko Kubota, JICA Senior Advisor on Gender and Development, was in charge of the field surveys on peace-building conducted in Mindanao in the Philippines and a survey conducted among female police officers in Afghanistan. She also observed that Japan’s assistance did not adequately address the concerns of individual women. “Many development workers thought that the perspective of gender equality was not important for Mindanao’s peace-building, since there are already many active female government officials in the central government,” she said. “However, women with important positions among the Moro people, who are demanding their own autonomous government, are mostly the relatives of influential men within the society. There has not been a strong focus on the perspectives of the most vulnerable women, those at the lower rungs of society, in the peace-building process in Mindanao.”

In Afghanistan, women suffer from even harsher conditions: 90% of women suffer violence just because they are women. In recent years, more female police officers have been employed to protect women. In a society of strict social norms, women filing complaints about sexual abuse run the risk of becoming social outcasts. “Female police officers resent the violence that many women including themselves suffer; thus, they are strongly motivated to perform their duties to help the victims,” says Kubota. “To support these women, I felt that it was necessary to develop their capacity to fight violence as well as to support their male colleagues who recognize the importance of women’s active participation in society,” she says.

In all of these countries, it is important not only to listen to the voices of the most vulnerable women but also to encourage women to address their own needs and make steps forward. The study leads to the conclusion that women should join hands with other women to educate and train themselves to become self-reliant and play more leading roles. At the same time, each society should accept women’s ways of living and leadership.

The well-known saying, “a chain is no stronger than its weakest link,” means that a society is only as strong as its most vulnerable people, and those people are often women. As they become agents of change, society itself becomes stronger – a chain no longer in danger of breaking.

#### DISASTER PREVENTION



In Sri Lanka, on the request of local women and with the help from local people, Oxfam built a reservoir to prevent flooding.

# Together with Women!

## Stronger Finances for a Better Future



Innovative financial education uplifts poor families in Honduras



Women learn how to prepare light meals to sell as part of the training.

To reduce a strikingly high rate of people living in poverty (up to 60%, according to 2010 World Bank data), the Central American nation of Honduras is experimenting with conditional cash transfers (CCT) to aid the poor. CCTs are part of a government system that offers subsidies to poor households, subject to several conditions: They must commit to sending their children to school and having regular health check-ups for mothers and children. Japan began supporting this initiative in 2015 through a technical cooperation project with the goal of helping poor people effectively utilize available financial services and eventually improve their livelihoods independent of the subsidies.

This project has a three-pronged goal: the CCT recipients first learn to manage household costs; they then receive financial education to understand deposits and loans; and eventually they improve their livelihoods. To that end, various activities are conducted in the five participating cities including Tegucigalpa, the capital. One of these activities is training for the mothers who receive CCT. “Since many of the women here cannot read or do simple calculations, I try to teach household bookkeeping carefully and in a way that is easy to understand,” explained Akihiro Tsukamoto, the chief advisor of the project. “Also, I ask not only mothers but also their children to participate since younger people are better than their parents at reading and doing calculations.” As part of the project, the government and JICA encourage local financial institutions to provide products and services that meet the needs of the poor.

The project has shown tangible results. For example, al-

most half of the 1,000 targeted households have begun to keep household account records. Additionally, the number of households in which both husband and wife do book-keeping together has increased, whereas before the program, husbands were the sole bookkeepers. And in about two thirds of the households that underwent the training, deposit amounts increased compared to one year ago.

“I hope that proactively managing their household budgets not only helps these women set savings goals for their children’s education or to start a business,” Tsukamoto said, “but I hope that it also encourages them to reach for bigger dreams of their own.”



A financial institution staff member teaches finance basics to poor families.





When women take an active role in household finances, the results go far beyond better personal budgeting or higher incomes. Having a clearer financial understanding and a stronger sense of economic empowerment enables women to revitalize their own families and the society around them.



## Building better business opportunities in Africa through networking in Japan



During the program last year, African women visited Atelier Yoshino (Sagamihara City, Kanagawa Prefecture), a ballet costume rental company established by a female entrepreneur.

From seed funding to expansion strategies—entrepreneurial women from Japan and several African countries have been discovering that they have a lot to learn from each other. Following the Fifth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD V) in 2013, JICA teamed up with Yokohama City to run a training series called Africa-Japan Business Women Exchange Seminars.

Women in many African countries face obstacles getting financing and social services to start, maintain, and grow their businesses. As a result, women have more difficulty than men in finding and expanding business opportunities. Since 2013, JICA has invited female entrepreneurs from Africa – and administrative officials who are in the position to support entrepreneurs – to Yokohama City in Kanagawa Prefecture for training. In total, 58 individuals from 18 African countries have participated in the first four years of this 5-year program.

The program aims to teach the participants from Africa about female entrepreneurs in Japan to enhance their own initiatives when they go back home. In the program last year, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry and Japan Finance Corporation gave lectures on the current business climate in Japan and the challenges and opportunities faced by female entrepreneurs. The visitors listened to Japanese female entrepreneurs who work in fashion and agriculture and exchanged ideas with Japanese business organizations.

The effects of the training have proven long-lasting. The program is a rare opportunity for networking among female entrepreneurs from Japan and Africa, and the women con-

tinue to stay in touch to share business experiences and give each other advice on business plans. Some of the administrative officials who participated in the program added steps to their ministries' economic empowerment action plans to encourage women to start businesses. And one participant is reportedly working hard to expand her business by hiring women, as she was deeply impressed by the fact that female entrepreneurs in Japan seek out cooperation with each other and find meaning beyond monetary profit.

JICA plans to maintain the network that was built by the program and continue to provide follow-up support to the participants now that they have returned to their home countries.



A workshop taught by former participants in the JICA Senior Overseas Cooperation Volunteers program on methods to enhance quality and productivity.

# • TRENDS •



United States of America

## Discussing Structural Transformation in Africa



In April 2017 in New York City, JICA and the Japanese Mission to the United Nations hosted a conference to discuss how structural transformation could help achieve UN-identified Sustainable Development Goals in Africa. United Nations officials and representatives of diplomatic missions from various countries participated in the conference, which was a follow-up event to the Sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD VI) held in Kenya in 2016. Participants at that development summit had discussed challenges facing the African economy and how the region should pursue industrialization in the years to come.

At the New York conference, Ambassador Koro Bessho of the Permanent Mission of Japan to the UN gave the opening remarks, and then Dr. Naohiro Kitano, Director of JICA Research Institute

Panel discussion

(JICA-RI) delivered the keynote speech. Dr. Kitano explained JICA's initiatives to assist in the structural transformation in Africa, including supporting industrial policies to help create a better business environment and providing assistance for science and math education to develop human resources needed for rapidly evolving businesses and industries.

In a panel discussion, the speakers exchanged views on how to achieve structural transformation in Africa and how to evaluate progress. Dr. Akio Hosono, Senior Research Advisor of JICA-RI, emphasized the importance of the learning capacity of a country, soft and hard infrastructure, and the capacity of institutions to achieve a country's structural transformation. The Nobel Laureate Professor Joseph Stiglitz of Columbia University suggested that countries should focus more on the well-being of the society, which cannot be measured by GDP.



Mongolia

## Tsetsii Wind Farm Project in Mongolia Wins Prize at the IJGlobal Awards 2016



In March 2017, the internationally renowned project finance magazine IJ Global headquartered in the UK held its award ceremony IJGlobal Awards 2016 in Singapore to honor excellent financing projects in the energy and infrastructure fields. Winning in the wind power development project division in the Asia Pacific region was the Tsetsii Wind Farm Project, which is being implemented in Mongolia with private sector investment financing support from JICA.

Tsetsii is the second wind farm project designed to promote the spread of renewable energy in Mongolia, a country that is facing a pressing demand for power. A special-purpose company, Clean Energy Asia LLC (CEA), was established in Mongolia by Mongolian-owned Newcom LLC and SB Energy Corp., a subsidiary of Japan's Softbank Group Corp., to construct and operate a 50-MW

Participants at the IJGlobal Awards Ceremony

wind power station. The wind farm is slated to begin operation in December 2017.

JICA and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) are contributing financing for CEA. This is the first time JICA has made a private-sector investment financing in the renewable energy field. The wind farm is expected to mitigate climate change and contribute to sustainable economic development in Mongolia. The project is consistent with the "Partnership for Quality Infrastructure" being promoted by the Japanese government with due consideration on life cycle costs, environmental and social sustainability.

IJGlobal awards are given annually to projects in 14 sectors including renewable energy resources such as thermal, solar, and wind power and infrastructure development such as airport and road construction. The projects must be of sufficient quality to serve as models for other countries and sectors.



Jamaica

## Improving Jamaica's Disaster Emergency Communication System



In April 2017, JICA signed a grant agreement with the government of Jamaica to help the country develop its emergency communication system. The project's goal is to improve the digital radio communication system deployed throughout Jamaica to ensure prompt and stable transmission of information in an emergency. The system will alert relevant agencies and the public in order to reduce the risk of harm during a disaster.

Its position in the Atlantic Ocean hurricane belt makes Jamaica vulnerable to flooding and landslides caused by large-scale hurricanes and tropical rainstorms. Such disasters result in the loss of lives and widespread infrastructure damage. The government of Jamaica has established development goals of alleviating disaster risk and adapting to climate change. To achieve these goals, the

Finance Minister Audley Shaw (second from left) and JICA Resident Representative Kenji Tobita (third from left) at the signing ceremony

government has prioritized strengthening the country's capacity to respond to disasters. However, the existing radio communication system developed to reduce disaster risk is not being fully utilized due to its limited communication capacity and transmission range. As a result, disaster communications are limited primarily to e-mail and mobile telephony. When disasters have struck, the system has faced lags in transmitting warnings and delays in ascertaining and responding to disaster conditions.

The new system is expected not only to facilitate speedy, stable radio communications for disaster prevention, but also to reduce the impact of disasters by improving information exchange and collaboration among responding agencies. By strengthening Jamaica's capacity to respond to disasters, this project also aims to build a nationwide awareness of the potential to save lives and prevent economic damage when a disaster strikes.



## JICA Nepal Office



# Nama Raj Adhikari

Associate Program Manager

Nama Raj Adhikari joined the JICA Nepal Office in 2012 as an officer in charge of local governance and community development. He also oversees the Agriculture and Rural Development sector. He is a graduate of the Sociology Department of Tribhuvan University of Nepal, where he majored in gender studies and project management.

Adhikari heads a project that integrates the Nepalese government's Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Policy into local planning. The project known as the Gender Mainstreaming and Social Inclusion Project (GeMSIP) was implemented in two districts: Syangja, 240 km west of capital Kathmandu, and Morang, 530 km east of the capital. When the government developed the GESI Policy, it asked all local governments to allocate 35% of their budget to implementing it; however, only a small number of local governments did so effectively.

GeMSIP has increased the participation of women and marginalized people in local planning, which has ultimately helped secure a budget for the GESI policy. Local political leaders, most of whom are men, have also begun to recognize that women can contribute to local development.

Adhikari also leads a community mediation project for access to justice, which seeks to resolve local disputes by using community mediators. Such a

project is crucially important in a country that is as multi-cultural, multi-lingual, and geographically diverse as Nepal, with people of different castes and ethnic groups living together. This project has helped maintain social harmony and peace and many women and marginalized people feel proud to be actively involved in resolving local disputes as community mediators. The government has also recognized community mediation as an important function of the local government. Adhikari said, "Of course, it was difficult to change people's mindsets. However, social mobilization is the right way to motivate people to involve women in development. Regular participation in mediation and monitoring from different stakeholders is crucial to sustain the project's achievements." Adhikari added, "Gender mainstreaming is a concern that cuts across all of our issues, and I will seek to integrate GESI into all current and future projects."

Nepal has committed to graduating from its status as a least-developed country by 2022 and to becoming a middle-income country by 2030. To do so, the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is crucial. So, Adhikari said, "JICA's cooperation should contribute to achieving the major SDGs by strengthening local governments, which are the true frontline service providers in Nepal's governance system."

# Women's Voice Matters: For the better reconstruction of a society

Melanne Verveer

Executive Director, the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security

During my time as the first U.S. Ambassador for Global Women's Issues, I had the opportunity to meet with women in nearly sixty countries and to work with them to advance the political, economic, and social position of women around the world. In my travels everywhere, I've seen women on the front lines of change. They are leading their communities and exercising their agency and voice to overcome difficult challenges. In countries emerging from conflict and those affected by natural disasters, women are crucial to rebuilding communities.

I have worked with women from the Democratic Republic of the Congo to Haiti and from Afghanistan to Liberia, and I have seen firsthand how conflict and disaster increase women's vulnerability, and how insecurity creates real threats to women's safety and ability to build livelihoods and participate fully in their communities. We know that women are more likely than men to die during natural disasters, and we see how women are targeted, displaced, and marginalized during conflict. Often, fragile communities are affected by both conflict and disaster, deepening this vulnerability. However, women are also leaders in reconstruction, playing key roles in providing assistance to survivors of conflict and disaster, managing household resources, and rebuilding communities.

I am the Executive Director of the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, and we have joined forces with JICA on a collaboration at the nexus of gender, peace-building, and disaster risk reduction. Together, we have sought to understand women's roles in states affected by conflict and natural disaster in order to identify effective policy and programming



options for development agencies working to advance women's participation and leadership in peace-building and disaster risk reduction. Peace-building and disaster risk reduction efforts both seek to rebuild and restructure political, economic, and social systems and address the root causes of conflict- and disaster-related volatility. It is crucial to understand the overlap in both the vulnerabilities that women and girls face but also the opportunities for incorporating women's voices and capabilities into peace-building and disaster risk reduction. JICA has made an invaluable contribution to this effort, bringing together its expertise in these two areas to support women's dignity in times of instability and to lift up women's voices during reconstruction efforts.

Understanding these issues is key to creating smart development and effective conflict management, and it will be only become more important as climate change, urbanization, and population growth increase risk in already-fragile communities. Including women in decision-making at all levels can expand the range of perspectives and solutions which are considered, leading to more creative and more inclusive responses. Including women's needs, experiences, and abilities in addressing conflict and disaster is not only the right thing to do, it's the smart thing to do.

Peace-building and disaster risk reduction are both efforts that seek to be transformative in nature, addressing deeply rooted sources of conflict and vulnerability in order to create more inclusive and more peaceful communities; women are vital for these efforts and are powerful actors in reconstructing and reshaping societies.

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**Cover:** A woman prays during mass at St Joseph's Cathedral in the Ankawa district of Erbil, Iraq, which has become home to thousands of displaced Iraqi Christians. ©Matt Cardy / Getty Images

**Photo on pages 2-3:** Palestinian women engaged in prayer on the first day of Eid al-Fitr at the Al-Omari Mosque in the center of Gaza City. ©Getty Images



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.