

Gender and Development

Pursuing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment



Overview of the Issue

Gender can be defined within social and cultural contexts and can refer to the roles of men and women as well as their mutual relationship.

Generally, the fixed roles and responsibilities of men and women in a society tend to be subconsciously specified according to the sense of value, tradition, and custom of the people in the region. That is to say, various kinds of policies, systems and organizations are also subject to the subconscious determination. In addition, the conventional wisdom and social system in the modern world are likely to be formed based on a male perspective.

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) specifically address gender equality in Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls as a stand-alone goal. This goal is recognized as being cross-cutting as it “will make a crucial contribution to progress across all the Goals and targets.”

JICA strives for gender equality and women's and girl's empowerment by promoting gender mainstreaming—incorporating the gender perspective in all stages of its programs and projects—in light of the issues and needs resulting from different social roles and the power balance in society between men and women.

JICA Activities

JICA extends cooperation to create policies and systems that promote gender equality, to boost empowerment of women and girls through activities including maternal and child health promotion, education for women, support to female entrepreneurs [→ see the case study below], capacity building to cope with violence against women and girls, and support for security and training for victims of human trafficking.

At the same time, efforts are made in various other fields, such as peacebuilding, agriculture, natural environmental conservation, disaster risk reduction (DRR), governance, and infrastructure development to run projects in a manner in which the gender equality perspective is reflected in the results and actions that should be achieved through the projects.

For example, JICA's technical cooperation project in Sudan called “Project for Strengthening Peace through the Improvement of Public Services in Three Darfur States” encouraged women's participation and leadership in its pilot activities in such sectors as health, water, and employment. The project also promoted women's involvement in the peacebuilding process through the Women and Peace Committee.

JICA's ODA Loan project for India known as “Rajasthan Water Sector Livelihood Improvement Project” encouraged women to participate in water-user association activities—an area where women's participation had traditionally been limited. The project also contributed to better livelihoods of female farmers and greater participation of women in socioeconomic activities.

Asian Region: The Japan ASEAN Women Empowerment Fund

Contributing to women's empowerment through microfinance



A woman who has started a business with microfinance

Starting in 2016, JICA invests in an institutional fund that provides microfinance (small-scale finance primarily for poor people and low-income earners) for women in ASEAN member countries among other Asian countries as part of its assistance to women for their economic independence. This investment is aimed at encouraging efforts to improve financial access for women and contributing to poverty reduction and women's empowerment in the region.

This fund is successfully helping women to stabilize their livelihoods and facilitate their economic activities. For example, a single mother who received a loan from a microfinance institution financed by this fund to buy a cultivator increased her yield

through more efficient farm work. Another woman capitalized on such a loan to launch her business of producing silk fabrics apart from farming.

By meeting such needs of women for financial services, JICA encourages them to participate in the market economy, thereby contributing to their empowerment.