

International Women's Day 2021: JICA supports all-inclusive women growth through its agriculture, health, and forestry projects

~ *Women in leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world* ~

New Delhi, March 05, 2021: On March 8, countries around the world celebrate the International Women's Day, reminding us that women play a crucial role in cultural, political, social, and economic development. The Day makes people aware of women's rights and gender equality and provides an opportunity to realize how women deserve an equal future free from stigma and stereotypes that is sustainable, peaceful, and provides various opportunities.

This year's International Women's Day theme '**Women in leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world**' is in line with JICA's objectives. It celebrates the tremendous efforts made by women across the globe in working towards recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and in shaping an equal and sustainable future. JICA recognises women as key agents for development and ensures that women have an equal share of voice and leadership in decision-making in all its interventions. It encourages women entrepreneurship and business development through supporting women capacity building and leadership to expand their opportunities in industries and employment.

Speaking on the occasion, Ms. Aditi Puri, Principal Development Specialist, JICA India said, *"JICA realises the need for promoting women to participate in decision making in the community, as well as increasing women's financial access. We have been continuously supporting and accelerating gender parity and our projects focus on betterment of women's economic empowerment, education, health, rights & security. Our projects in India have been designed to promote women participation in all processes. To champion women's rights and fully harness their leadership potential, in readiness for, and in response to the pandemic, women's outlook must be integrated into the formulation and implementation of recovery policies and programs."*

In the health sector, to support women frontline health workers (FHWs) with information, knowledge, and mechanism to improve access to basic facilities for their wellbeing and overall safety, JICA is conducting an intervention research to understand the impact of COVID 19 on FHWs and pilot mitigation measures to decrease the impact and enhance their physical, social, mental and emotional well-being.

In January, JICA India launched a campaign "Achhi Aadat" in India to raise awareness among people about the importance of hygiene practices preventing the spread of Covid-19 and other infectious diseases. In order to reach the marginalized sections of society, the campaign has tied up with local NGOs, one of which is SEWA. Through SEWA, JICA India will be able to help low income independently employed women workers learn about sanitization and the importance of hygiene.

JICA is promoting gender mainstreaming to strengthen its efforts for gender equality and women's empowerment based on global and national mandates. For security of women, JICA is working in close coordination with an NGO- Terra People ACT Kanagawa (TPAK) to establish prevention programs against gender-based violence and preparing safety nets in high poverty rural settlements. An integral part of the project is making women aware of their rights and involving men as volunteers so that they can educate fellow men about gender equality.

In the agriculture and irrigation sector, under the JICA supported Rajasthan Water Sector Livelihood Improvement Project, JICA has been promoting gender governance. Govt. of Rajasthan has amended the Participatory Irrigation Act to enable women to participate in water management and with this project, JICA has been supporting the state govt in enhancing the role of women and ensuring their increased participation in Water User Associations (WUA) by establishment of WUA Women Wing. As of today, the total number of elected women representatives in WUA stands at 32 and co-opted women representatives are 83.

Punam Devi, a woman of Kanke block of Ranchi district expressed her feelings with smile on her face and said “I was able to get earning of Rs. 55,590 in a season through adoption of MDI technology.” Many women like Punam has experienced a better productivity and higher quality under the JICA supported Jharkhand Horticulture Intensification through Micro Drip Irrigation Project, which has resulted in them getting a higher market value of their produce. The technology has empowered women and given them motivation to work smarter at the field and not toil for long hours. The project thereby is empowering 30,000 women farmers to be financially independent and has helped their families through the incremental income.

Through Forestry projects, JICA aims to empower women facilitating the formation of Women Self Help Groups. JICA has been assisting improvement of the livelihood of forest-dependent communities. Members of Self-Help Groups (SHGs), largely composed of women, have been benefiting by having access to microcredit and capacity development in Income Generation Activities such as management skills, processing of agricultural products and production of handicrafts.

By promoting projects with a consideration on gender aspects, JICA would like to continue its contribution to accelerate the achievement in gender equality in India.



Under Rajasthan Water Sector Livelihood Improvement Project periodic WUA training organized at IMTI Kota : Women Representation from



Women produce higher and better productivity by applying Micor Drip Irrigation Technology employed under Jharkhand Horticulture Intensification through Micro Drip Irrigation

About JICA

Established, by a specific law, as an incorporated administrative institution under the Government of Japan, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) aims to contribute to the promotion of international cooperation, as a sole Japanese governmental agency in charge of ODA implementation. JICA is the world's largest bilateral donor agency. JICA works as a bridge between Japan and emerging countries, and provides assistance in forms of loan, grant and technical cooperation so that the emerging countries can strengthen their capabilities.

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