

# MOVING THE NEEDLE ON GENDER EQUITY THROUGH US-JAPAN COLLABORATION

From January to March 2022, JCIE gathered more than 40 women leaders from Japan and the United States to participate in a series of three online sessions to share insights into the challenges and opportunities for women's leadership in various fields. Co-chaired by Rep. Diana DeGette and Rep. Seiko Noda, the 2022 US-Japan Women Leaders Dialogue featured lively discussions on social and economic equity and how policymakers and other leaders are working to promote greater gender equity. Participants examined best practices in promoting women in politics in the United States and Japan. These discussions were informed by surveys prepared by JCIE to compare existing processes and support systems in both countries that are designed to foster women's political participation. The dialogue also took a deeper look at the state of women in STEM fields, which are so critical to the future economic growth of our countries.

## Summary of Findings

### 1. Improve Economic Equity and Security for All Women

- **Treat women's economic security as a critical component of domestic and global economic recovery in the aftermath of the pandemic** and take this opportunity to rethink fundamental structural inequities that disproportionately impacted women's economic security during this crisis.
- In particular, **the overrepresentation of women in non-regular and informal employment is a serious concern** that pushes women into vulnerable positions and lessens their lifetime earning potential.
- Ensure that workers—both men and women—across all sectors and types of businesses have **equitable access to paid family and medical leave** and are able to utilize that leave without fear of reprisal or negative impact on their careers.
- **Accessible and affordable caregiving is a critical element in closing gender gaps**, but it poses a difficult conundrum: users of care services require affordability, but providers of care—who are predominantly women—must be adequately compensated.
- Women worldwide spend much more time than men on unpaid household chores and care work—cleaning, cooking, grocery shopping, and providing child/elder care. We must **recognize, quantify, reduce, and redistribute unpaid work**.
- Government and corporate leaders should **maintain and expand access to workstyles that promote flexibility and work-life balance**, such as telework and telehealth. This creates new opportunities for men and women to rethink their work-life balance and their contributions to housework and childcare.

### 2. Create and Strengthen Empowering Frameworks for Women in Politics and Business

- **Engaging greater numbers and diversity of women in politics and corporate leadership is crucial** for more informed decision making, whether that entails understanding the real-life impact of policies or identifying new or overlooked business opportunities.
- **We must start early to change perceptions.** More work is needed at younger ages to inform girls and young women, as well as their male counterparts, that politics and business are not just a “man's world,” but places where all people can and should participate and make their voices heard. This requires efforts by parents, as well as schools, media, and others.
- **Don't assume laws are enough—concrete actions are needed to promote political engagement.** Active interventions are needed to successfully recruit, train, and fund women candidates, create caucuses, and establish support mechanisms.

- **Increase access to political leadership training programs** in both countries. Greater engagement of the academic sector in developing new and existing political training programs in Japan would be beneficial. Civic leadership education, particularly for girls and young women, is an important means of promoting political participation.

### 3. Promote Women in STEM

- Both governments should continue and expand their initiatives to **improve diversity and inclusion in STEM education at the K-12 level**. In addition, girls (and boys) need to see more female role models in STEM and be exposed to more information about the reality and variety of work in STEM fields.
- **Greater diversity and inclusion in STEM in universities is needed**. The presence of and mentoring by female professors can play a decisive role in encouraging young women to pursue a career in STEM. Universities need to have a full-scale, data-based articulation of their institutions' vision for recruitment, retention, and advancement of women in STEM.
- **Ongoing education and reskilling programs can provide valuable assistance** to women who want to reenter the STEM field after pausing their careers to care for children or other family members, as well as to women who may not have started in technology-related fields but see that as a potential path forward.
- **Venture capital (VC) is essential for entrepreneurship in STEM-related business, yet the field in both countries is dominated by men**. A number of initiatives have been launched to assist businesswomen and it would be helpful to compare notes on what has been effective to date and consider ways to ensure that more women's voices are represented in the VC sector.

## RECOMMENDATIONS: An Agenda for Collaboration on Gender Equity

In their May 2022 Joint Statement, President Biden and Prime Minister Kishida “concur that ensuring that all people, regardless of gender identity, can achieve their full potential is both a moral and strategic imperative, critical to every aspect of society and the economy.” The next step must be to clearly elucidate and integrate gender equity in the bilateral US-Japan collaborative agenda. The following are potential action items for that agenda.

### Explicitly incorporate gender in existing agreements

Steps should be taken to clarify and monitor how existing initiatives under the rubric of the CoRe Partnership, as well as the US-Japan Climate Partnership and other bilateral agreements, will work to ensure equity and inclusion.

### Promote research and dialogues on government and corporate policies to improve women's wellbeing

The United States and Japan should provide funding for joint analyses and dialogues that examine policies and practices both in the public and private sector that can improve the status of women.

### Expand or create bilateral programs to promote women in STEM in education and business

Increase bilateral academic exchanges and fellowship opportunities. Build networks among women leaders in STEM and encourage interaction with younger generations of women to show them potential career paths in STEM.

### Encourage investment in Japanese and American women entrepreneurs

Create opportunities to increase US-Japan networks of entrepreneurs and of venture capitalists who are interested in supporting women-led companies. Consider incorporating grants to women-led businesses in critical fields related to shared objectives of the bilateral partnership, such as green energy, cybersecurity, supply chain resilience, and femtech.

### Increase the availability of funding to civil society organizations for people-to-people exchanges

Cross-sectoral US-Japan dialogues that draw on the experiences of women in politics, business, academia, policy research, and media have proven to provide unique perspectives and insights, but the availability of funding for such exchanges has been shrinking over the past decade. Both governments should examine ways to expand their support of such programs.



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