

EMPOWERING OUR FUTURE: A PATH TOWARD WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN POLITICS, STEM, AND BEYOND

In September 2023, the Japan Center for International Exchange (JCIE) brought a delegation of four female Diet members and two corporate leaders from Japan to Washington DC as part of the US-Japan Women Leaders Dialogue. These leaders, led by the Dialogue's Japan co-chair, Hon. Seiko Noda (Liberal Democratic Party), engaged in a weeklong series of meetings with politicians and government officials, business leaders, journalists, policy experts, academics, and non-profit leaders. Discussions spanned a broad range of topics, from US-Japan trade and shared geopolitical concerns to domestic policy developments, strategies for promoting gender equity in the workplace and in government, women in peace and security, education, and women in the arts. A highlight of the week was a dialogue that brought together around 40 diverse leaders and experts for the US-Japan Women in STEM Roundtable. What follows are recommendations for areas where US-Japan collaboration would be particularly beneficial. A full report on the exchange is available online and includes a broader range of findings and recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

US-Japan cooperation on women in politics

- Promote exchanges on best practices in training and mentorship for aspiring female politicians, including through nongovernmental sector efforts that deepen bilateral networks among women politicians and other women leaders.
- Support joint research and dialogues on effective ways to address gender-based online abuse and harassment of women policymakers and candidates.
- Promote collaborative initiatives to examine effective methods of addressing implicit and explicit gender biases.
- Jointly examine and identify necessary structural changes, such as legislative reforms, to support work-life balance for politicians and promote a more inclusive political environment.

US-Japan cooperation on women in the workforce

- Support comparative analyses and sharing of data and best practices on public and private sector policies designed to create inclusive workplaces (e.g., flexible working arrangements, training and advancement opportunities, etc.), address the gender pay gap, and create pathways to managerial and C-suite jobs for women.
- Jointly examine how each country is working to provide accessible and affordable childcare and long-term care, and to “care for the caregivers” by improving the financial security and wellbeing of caregivers.
- Promote greater understanding of the impact of ongoing gender imbalances in caregiving and household chores (e.g., Japan's low birthrate and both countries' high rates of women in part-time positions after childbirth).
- Conduct joint studies of the impact of parental leave policies, particularly recent changes in Japanese law and corporate policies to encourage men to take parental leave, and of reproductive health rights on women's careers.

US-Japan cooperation on women in international relations & WPS

- Support efforts by civil society organizations and the private sector in both countries to promote democratic norms and human rights through educational and awareness-raising initiatives, incorporating a focus on gender.
- Implement and expand existing bilateral and multilateral commitments to address gender issues—e.g., enhance US-Japan-ROK cooperation/exchanges to deepen economic and technology cooperation and promote women's economic participation.
- Continue to coordinate closely with allies and partners to ensure women are at the table in discussions on peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction.
- Work collaboratively within forums like IPEF and APEC to address vulnerabilities exposed by the pandemic and recent conflicts; apply a gendered lens to identify measures to safeguard economic stability and resilience for all.

- Foster dialogue and collaboration among a wide range of stakeholders to promote comprehensive strategies and frameworks for implementing women, peace and security (WPS) principles—e.g., expand and enhance US-Japan collaboration on disaster risk reduction and recovery efforts, with a focus on gender-sensitive approaches.
- Provide increased government support for US-Japan people-to-people exchanges, study abroad programs, and language immersion programs, and ensure that they are conducted in ways that promote inclusivity and equity.

US-Japan cooperation to promote women in STEM

Given the common challenges facing the United States and Japan on this topic, participants in this year's US-Japan Women Leaders Dialogue were asked to offer ideas on how the two countries could effectively promote the sharing of best practices and knowledge, and to expand the opportunities for women in STEM. What follows are a number of the recommendations that emerged. One underlying theme was the importance of exploring if existing mechanisms and frameworks can be expanded or reimaged to promote US-Japan cooperation on this issue, and to bring men into these dialogues.

K-12 level

- Increase opportunities for students living in Japan and the US who are interested in STEM to interact online or through in-person exchanges to build a sense of belonging to a community across countries.
- Provide American and Japanese public-school teachers with resources and opportunities to learn from peers implementing effective active learning and inquiry-based learning in their classrooms (in-person or virtual exchanges)—e.g., what can Japan learn from the Million Girls Moonshot that could be adapted to the Japanese academic context?

University level

- Conduct joint studies of best practices on (1) hiring to recruit and retain women faculty in STEM; and (2) inclusive curriculum in STEM learning for undergraduate/graduate students and continuing education for women who want to join the STEM workforce.
- Jointly establish an international Community of Practice (CoP) to exchange and promote strategies and practices to broaden perspectives and career opportunities in STEM.
- Create a government- or privately funded endowment to provide scholarships and grants to promote US-Japan study abroad and collaborative research opportunities for women in STEM—e.g., build on existing institutional arrangements, such as expanding the TOMODACHI-STEM Women's Leadership and Research Program, or create a program that leverages current relationships such as that between Tsuda University and Spellman College.

STEM business and entrepreneurship

- Promote the strategic planning of career paths and roles and share best practices in both countries, for example in the area of skills-based hiring practices.
- Compare and analyze the impact of US and Japanese government and industry initiatives such as quotas and reporting requirements on corporate and investor behavior.
- Promote US-Japan collaboration to share the findings of the White House's initiatives to bring industry and academia together to assess needs and ensure a diverse workforce.
- Encourage collaboration to provide continuing education with a focus on reskilling programs for women that enable them to keep up with and take advantage of rapid changes in technology.
- Convene existing STEM entrepreneurship support organizations for shared learnings and potential partnerships.
- Explore joint alternative funding and access to non-capital resources for women entrepreneurs in STEM fields.
- Convene existing fellowship and internship programs (entrepreneurship and STEM generally) for shared learnings and potential partnerships.



Japan Center for International Exchange (JCIE/Japan)
 Meisan Tameike Bldg. 7F, 1-1-12 Akasaka, Minato-ku, Tokyo, Japan 107-0052
Japan Center for International Exchange, Inc. (JCIE/USA)
 475 Riverside Drive, Suite 731, New York, NY 10115

We thank the U.S. Embassy in Japan for their support of the 2023 US-Japan Women Leaders Dialogue. Support for the dialogue was also provided by the MRA Foundation and the Toshiba International Foundation.

