

TICADV Thematic Session 4
Driving Development through Gender Equality:
Advancing the Empowerment of Women
H.E. Mr. Fumio Kishida
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan
9:00-12:00, 2nd June @ Pacifico Yokohama

Madam Chairperson, thank you for your introduction.

Ladies and gentlemen,

At TICAD V vigorous discussions are taking place concerning the direction of Africa's growth and the realization of human security from various aspects, such as economy, society and peace and stability. In the course of discussion, it has been pointed out that one of the most important factors for the achievement of Africa's growth is human resources.

As Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said yesterday, Japan has focused on human resource development in Africa. In particular, we are stepping up our efforts to help develop human resources for business and industry through vocational training, higher education, and the expansion of 'kaizen' practices. I hope that the excellent human resources developed through these undertakings will serve as a solid foundation for Africa's growth.

At present, there is a certain segment of human resources that has not been well used in Africa - that is women. When I visited Africa I saw women traveling over the highlands carrying firewood overhead, which were about three times the height of the women themselves. I was surprised at the scene, and asked myself if those women are released from this kind of hard labor they can unlock their true potential. Changes need to be made to make sure that women are incorporated into the mainstream of and play much more active roles in their countries' development.

Let me share a successful example with you. Yesterday, Prime Minister Abe talked about a project that doubled incomes of smallholder farmers in Kenya. The secret of this success was women. When the project was launched, a rule was introduced to ensure the equal participation of female and male farmers in all the related training sessions, considering the fact that 70% of the workforce were female. As a result, women started to show their strong capabilities in all kinds of steps in the project. One example was a market research exercise in which they studied what items would sell well and when they would be sold with higher margins, and so on. Under the project, farmers in the village successfully doubled their incomes within two years. Those women now explain to those who visit the village to learn about their practices that a weekly market survey is the key. In the not so distant future, they might visit Japan for agribusiness.

It is gender mainstreaming that is necessary to make it happen,- in other words, to focus on women in all aspects of development. That is what Japan always keeps in mind when engaging in assistance to Africa.

In this regard, it is naturally essential to strengthen assistance in addressing female-specific issues, for instance, maternal, newborn, and child health care and reproductive health. Also, it is essential to ensure gender equality in education opportunities. The installation of separate toilets for boys and girls contribute to increases the rates of girls who enroll in schools. In addition, it is necessary to establish a sound legal system and raise awareness regarding personal identification and authorities for signing loan contracts so as to realize gender equality for entrepreneurship.

It is also known that peace and stability can be more effectively maintained through ensuring women's participation in a series of processes from conflict prevention to peace building. Women are more likely to suffer critical damage in the event of conflict or disaster because of their vulnerability. Therefore, just as disarmament of soldiers and vocational training are inseparable, care services to heal wounds from the violence and support for human development need to be simultaneously provided for women in a post-conflict recovery process. By all accounts, femal perspectives should be effectively incorporated in each process from conflict prevention and peace building, to reconstruction. With regard to disaster risk reduction, by involving women in all the procedures—starting from the formulation of disaster risk reduction plans—it is possible to accommodate needs based on thoughtful preparation for actual situations. In line with this approach, Japan led international efforts to adopt the resolution on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in Natural Disasters in a UN session last year. Going forward, we are committed to giving due consideration regarding gender equality and the empowerment of women in all arenas when implementing assistance measures.

The African Union (AU) has designated the decade from 2010 to 2020 as the African Women's Decade. Actually, 'women' are one of the central themes of the Japanese growth strategies being implemented by the Abe administration. On the diplomatic front, I attach great importance to peace-, safety-, and women-oriented perspectives. The central idea here in common is that unless women exert their capabilities nations cannot develop. Driven by the passion shared among all, Japan will continuously strive to continue to enhance assistance for women in Africa.

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