

Development Strategy for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

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Government of Japan

Considering various problems faced by the international community, the Government of Japan adopted the Development Cooperation Charter by the Cabinet in February 2015. This Charter focuses on quality growth and poverty eradication through such growth based on the concept of human security. As one of the principles for securing the appropriateness of development cooperation, the Charter cites promotion of women's participation and clearly states Japan's commitment to further encourage participation of women at every phase of development cooperation and be more proactive in ensuring that women share equitably in the fruits of development. Such importance of women's empowerment is recognized internationally in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit in September 2015. It specifies the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as the international community's commitment to be achieved by 2030, in which Goal 5 is to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. It also clearly indicates that these endeavors would make a crucial contribution to progress across all the Goals.

Japan considers that gender equality and empowerment of women are indispensable for promoting human security, and has supported a series of international commitments and frameworks, starting from the World Plan of Action adopted at the first World Conference on Women in 1975, followed by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1979 and the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action in 1995, etc. With respect to Japan's Official Development Assistance (ODA) policy, Japan has implemented international development cooperation based on the Initiative on Women in Development (WID) (1995) and the Initiative on Gender and Development (GAD) (2005). Decades-long efforts of the international community have reduced gender disparities in education, health and the labor market, but there still remains substantial gender inequality in many social aspects represented by discriminatory practices and laws based on conventional concepts and rules of fixed gender roles. Furthermore, the environment surrounding women has become severer due to conflicts, terror attacks, infectious diseases, climate change and natural disasters. Development policy for ensuring gender equality and greater roles of women in development and social innovation has come to be further required in response to such changes in the environment and newly arising challenges in promoting development.

Based on these recognitions and from the perspective of advancing proactive contribution to peace and human security, Japan hereby formulates the Development Strategy for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment based on the Development Cooperation Charter with the aim of making more proactive contribution to promoting peace, stability and prosperity of the international community.

1. Vision and Basic Principles

Initiatives for the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment are significant in all development fields. Development cooperation will be based on the following vision and basic principles.

1.1 Vision

- Aiming to promote human security, ensure peace and safety, and seek quality growth of economy and society, Japan considers women as agents of change in development and society. Japan will position women's participation in decision-making processes and their empowerment as priorities to be considered in all fields, levels, and phases of development cooperation, thereby accelerating gender mainstreaming in development.
- Based on the awareness of power of women as the greatest potential for growth, Japan will recognize women's disproportionate burden of unpaid care, such as housework, child rearing, nursing care and local activities, which has hindered women's social participation, and build a mechanism for reducing and redistributing such labor and burden.
- Japan will endeavor not only for the protection and capacity building of those that are more vulnerable in conflicts or natural disasters such as women, young people and children, but also to increase awareness about gender equality among men in general and decision makers in local communities as well as among influential people (administrators, educators, politicians and religious leaders) through advocacy and training, and accelerate the transformation of social structure.
- Japan intends to expand women's options in their lives and enable them to pursue their possibilities freely, promote quality growth (inclusiveness, sustainability and resilience) and poverty eradication through such growth¹, and also contribute to promoting women's social participation and creating "a society where all women shine" by improving their environments and establishing such institutions.
- Through the abovementioned initiatives, Japan will endeavor to achieve the empowerment of all women and girls and establish policies and institutions to build a society where men and women support each other. Taking measures against increasingly diversified and multifaceted development challenges, Japan will play a leading role in international community, based on its own experience and knowledge in areas such as structural reformation and mind-set for growth and enhancing sustainability and resilience of societies.

¹ See the Development Cooperation Charter (Cabinet decision in February 2015):
<http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/files/000067688.pdf>

1.2 Basic Principles

(1) [Promotion of Women's Rights]

In many regions in the world, women's peace and security are threatened, and prompt measures are required for guaranteeing women's rights and safety. Japan will offer support for ensuring fundamental rights of women in all fields and improving their vulnerable positions and conditions.

(2) [Building the Capacity of Women and Girls to Reach their Full Potential]

Due to restrictions on women's behavior and gender disparities in opportunities, much of women's potential remains untapped in the world. Japan will increase capability of women to take ownership in realizing their rights and determining their life outcomes among various options and can lead a better life with dignity under any circumstances.

(3) [Advancement of Leadership]

Japan will encourage women's participation in every aspect of society such as in politics, governance, working environment, and in household in order that women's interests and concerns are reflected properly in decision-making and policies made in respective households and regions.

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●Based on the principle of human security, Japan will promote the sustainable development through women's empowerment and contribute to peace and security of the region and international community.



2. Approach

(1) Diversity and Socio-culturally Sensitive Approach through Dialogue and Collaboration

In order to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, it is necessary to have a broad range of parties involved at the central and local government levels, as well as to make adjustments and collaboration among them. Therefore, Japan will offer support through dialogue and collaboration based on the viewpoint and needs of the people in recipient countries. Since circumstances and problems women face are diverse and its changes generally take time, mid- and long-term measures are required, considering each woman's situation. Accordingly, paying due attention to the diversity of people, including ethnicity and other socio-economic attributes, Japan will offer development cooperation, while ensuring involvement of men and decision makers of respective regions, to promote social participation of women. Furthermore, Japan continues to take the approach of building reciprocal relationships with developing countries whereby both countries learn from each other and develop together, and facilitate the ownership of developing countries to achieve sustainable development.

(2) Further Gender Mainstreaming in Projects and Organizations

In 2005, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs established the system of "ODA Gender Officer" both in its Headquarters and Embassies in ODA recipient countries and has endeavored to carry out all projects in an effective manner from a gender equality perspective. Furthermore, the Gender Mainstreaming Division was established in April 2014 to reflect broader gender viewpoints in diplomatic policies. Japan will further make efforts for raising awareness of gender equality of all parties engaging in ODA by fully utilizing the ODA Gender Officer system.

At the same time, Japan will promote collection and analysis of best practices contributing to promoting women's empowerment and will facilitate research and studies on policies for the purpose of advancing gender mainstreaming not merely at the stage of carrying out projects, as has endeavored so far, but also at all stages from planning to monitoring and evaluation of projects.

(3) Building High-impact Partnerships

In further leveraging women's capacity for eradicating poverty and achieving quality growth, it is expected that synergetic effects will be made through the collaboration of the parties in the economic field and the humanitarian field, as well as the collaboration among parties in the development field. Japan will further strengthen collaboration with the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (DAC of OECD), UN Women, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other UN organizations, multinational development banks including the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the African Development Bank, civil society and education and research institutes, etc. Additionally, by strengthening the collaboration with private sector, local communities and local

governments, Japan will support the economic development of developing countries even more strongly and effectively. Japan will also organize international conferences, such as the World Assembly for Women (WAW!), as a platform for opinion exchanges and collaboration, thereby playing a leading role in promoting women's empowerment and international collaboration among diverse stakeholders.

3. Priority Initiatives for Providing Support under the Basic Principles

For providing effective support under the Basic Principles, Japan will focus on the following initiatives.

3.1 Promotion of Women's and Girls' Rights

● Elimination of Gender-based Violence and Discrimination in All Forms

In not a few countries around the world, discrimination and violence based on gender, ethnicity, class and other causes exist in every aspect of society such as in politics, governance, working environment and in household. Japan will support efforts by developing countries to establish legislation, policies and administrative frameworks as well as to achieve gender equality in all of the three branches of government—legislative, executive and judicial—, based on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and other international human rights agreements and conventions. Japan will also commit to the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence including human trafficking and sexual exploitation including child, early and forced marriage (CEFM) and forced labor. At the same time, Japan will enhance formal and non-formal education and awareness-raising activities to women and men including those in their adolescence who are more likely to be vulnerable to violence or involved in inflicting violence on others, and their families and communities, with a view to improve their mindsets and attitudes in relation to women's human rights.

● Promoting Gender Responsive Infrastructure and Safe Community

Toward elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls, Japan will reinforce community measures to prevent crimes and ensure safety, and in particular, carry out the development of infrastructure that integrates gender equality. More specifically, needs-based support will be provided in response to that of respective communities, such as ensuring safety for women and girls by installing sidewalks and streetlights.

In addition, Japan will provide support towards the society to prevent violence against women and girls in public spaces and to swiftly respond to such violence in case it should occur. Japan will also promote women's active participation and leadership in improving and operating above-mentioned infrastructure.

● Elimination of Violence against Women in Conflict

As stipulated in UNSC resolution 1325—the first resolution that associates women with peace and security—, and other related resolutions, women are vulnerable to sexual violence and human trafficking in conflict, and the importance of protecting women's rights and meeting their special needs increases to a higher level than usual under such circumstances. In September 2015, Japan formulated the “National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security” regarding its implementation of this resolution.

Based on this plan, initiatives to encourage women's participation in decision-making processes and integrate women's rights and gender equality into issues related to peace and security take place. Japan will also play an important role in implementing international initiatives as well, including the "G8 Declaration on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict."

- Emergency Assistance from Gender Equality Perspective (Protection of Women in Natural Disasters)

Women are notably vulnerable to various dangers and risks caused by natural disasters and climate change. In particular, it is said that natural disasters have greater impacts on women, especially elderly women and expecting and nursing mothers, than on men. On the other hand, the potential and leadership that women could demonstrate in a time of disaster have not been fully recognized. With this in mind, Japan will strengthen initiatives to provide humanitarian assistance in response to the needs specific to women and girls and protect their safety and rights, and will also proactively support to help women rebuild their everyday lives in post-disaster situations. Furthermore, as clearly stipulated in the "Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030," which was adopted at the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held in March 2015, women's participation is critical to effectively manage disaster risk. Accordingly, Japan will contribute to building a disaster-resilient society while taking gender equality into consideration.

- Securing Women's Health Throughout Their Lives

Based on the "Basic Design for Peace and Health (Global Health Cooperation)" published in September 2015, Japan will strengthen health systems and encourage women, men, families and communities to change their mindsets and behavior, thereby contributing to ensuring women's lifetime health. Specifically, in cooperation with international organizations and local communities, Japan will take measures in the following four priority fields: (i) strengthening maternal and child health services including nutrition improvements for reducing infant and maternal mortality rates ; (ii) ensuring equal access of women and men to quality health services; (iii) promoting women's empowerment in decision making on their health including sexual and reproductive health; and (iv) developing medical human resources such as doctors, nurses and midwives, and consequently increasing the number of female health workers.

3.2 Building the Capacity of Women and Girls to Reach their Full Potential

- Promoting and Strengthening Girls' Education

Although significant progress has been made in reducing gender disparity in primary education in developing countries, low rates of girls who complete primary education and move on to secondary education remain a crucial issue in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Arab countries. Under such circumstances, Japan will work to promote and strengthen girls' education based on the "Learning Strategy for Peace and Growth" announced in September 2015.

In addition to the development of teachers in consideration of gender balance and the promotion of gender-sensitive teaching techniques, Japan will take measures to improve school environment for girls (e.g. installation of separate toilets for girls, exterior walls for school buildings, and girls' dormitories annexed to schools), thereby preventing

sexual violence, kidnapping and trafficking, so as to enable girls not only to “enroll” in school but also to “complete” school education. Japan will also promote sports education for girls and women, and will also support lifelong learning and non-formal education intended for women who did not have opportunities to learn at school. By making use of its ICT, Japan will also contribute to improving the quality of education in developing countries.

Regarding education in general, with an awareness of the fact that social customs that prevent girls from access to education exist in some developing countries, Japan will also commit to improving awareness of the importance of girls’ education in the whole community including girls’ parents and those who have decision-making power.

- Vocational Training Support for Women

In developing countries, many women still tend to engage in low-wage, unstable employment or labor in the informal sector including domestic work. In order to promote women’s economic activities, Japan will implement vocational training support measures that will lead to the creation of new jobs for women and increase their income, as well as enabling them to continue to work. In this process, not only the support in traditional sectors such as sewing and farming will be provided, but also that in business sectors where vocational training is directly connected to employment and income (e.g. beauty service and ICT). Japan will strengthen cooperative relationships with industries and enhance women’s employability so that they can adapt to changes in technology and labor demand. Japan will also work to enrich vocational and technical education and training while taking into consideration women’s life stages.

- Promotion of the Active Role of Women in STEM Fields and Careers

Japan will encourage women to enter traditionally male-centered areas (e.g. natural science, information and communications technologies, business management, medicine, law, trade and economics and finance) and to explore their possibilities as entrepreneurs and researchers in these areas, and will support efforts to diversify the choices of their future careers and areas of study and enable them to achieve self-fulfillment. As a priority task, it will help increase the number of female students who major in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) and who have the potential to contribute to the advancement of science and technology and the creation and development of new industries.

Specifically, with the objective of fostering women specialized in science and engineering who will play an active role in science and technology innovation, Japan will strengthen cooperation among government, private sector and academia to take consistent support measures, such as providing information on role models, continuing education and employment.

- Reduction of Unpaid Care Work

Women bear massive burden of long hours of unpaid care work such as domestic work, food production for domestic consumption, management of livestock, and taking care of children and adults who need care. This unpaid care work is considered to impede economic activities of women. This issue of uneven distribution of unpaid care work between women and men should be properly recognized and such work should be reduced and redistributed within the household and the society. In this field, Japan will strive to reform the still-existing stereotyped division of roles between women and men

by providing awareness-raising training, whilst making efforts in reduction of the workload of unpaid care work placed on women, through the suitable technology and infrastructure. To this end, Japan will provide assistance such as improving water supply facilities and equipment including water treatment plants and wells to liberate women and children from the load of collecting water, and improve their access to electricity and other sorts of energy.

- **Ensuring Availability and Sustainable Management of Water and Sanitation**

Access to water and sanitation correlates with women's freedom of movement and participation in economic and social activities. In developing countries, a number of women stay home due to the lack or shortage of safe, secure and clean public toilets. In some cases, social customs and prejudiced views make it difficult for them to give voice to their sanitary needs concerning menstruation. In light of this, Japan will promote the improvement of toilets at schools and other public facilities and take measures to increase access to water and sanitation from the perspective of gender equality, whilst improving the enrollment and completion ratio of women as well as expanding women's opportunities of economic activities and social advancement.

- **Supporting Gender-responsive Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries**

Reportedly, in rural areas of developing countries, since a high proportion of women engage in work and women's labor plays a significant role, promotion of gender equality contribute to achieving better results of not only empowering women but also enhancing their income and productivity. Therefore, from the perspective of gender equality, Japan will carry out initiatives in agriculture, forestry and fisheries, such as promoting women's rights and their participation in management, in order to contribute to building food value chains, fostering agriculture, forestry and fisheries, and improving production environment, such as land and water use.

- **Capacity Building of Women to Act in Conflict Prevention and Resolution, Peacebuilding, and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)**

With the aim of enabling more women to play an active part in the areas mentioned above, Japan will raise awareness of these undertakings through career education for women and enhance their training for promotion to senior officials.

3.3 Advancement of Women's Leadership in Politics, Economy and Other Public Fields

- **Promotion of Women's Economic Empowerment**

Women's economic empowerment is indispensable for enabling women to save themselves and their families from poverty, live a life with dignity and play a leading role in the society. Advancement of women's leadership will significantly contribute to the development of society and economy. However, many women still have only limited access to educational opportunities, proper information and productive resources such as land, property and financial services, and are often forced to work at low wages under unstable employment conditions or in informal sectors.

Japan will work for women's economic empowerment through supporting women entrepreneurs, providing small-scale financial services, such as microfinance, including deposit and insurance services, and promoting women's participation in local industries

and One Village One Product campaigns. Furthermore, due consideration will be given to creating and expanding social capital and human networks for ensuring women's social participation and building of resilient local communities.

- **Advancement of Women's Leadership in Politics and Other Public Fields and Promotion of Gender-responsive Governance**

Efforts will be made to strengthen the functions of national machineries, which are established by the governments of respective countries for the purpose of comprehensively promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, and to enhance administrative capabilities with the aim of strengthening women's leadership in politics and other public fields. Japan will offer support for the development of legal systems ensuring gender equality, democratization and the establishment of national development plans, as well as for other initiatives to facilitate planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating policies, measures and programs conducted by relevant ministries and agencies other than national machineries for the purpose of promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.

Additionally, Japan will support efforts to enhance local governments' capacity to promote development from a gender equality perspective and to train police officers and judicial personnel who understand and act for women's rights and protection.

- **Promoting Women's Participation in Conflict Prevention and Resolution, Peacebuilding, and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)**

In order to strengthen women's leadership in the process of policy making concerning conflict prevention, mitigation and conciliation or peacebuilding, etc., Japan will provide training to enhance conflict resolution skills at educational institutions in Japan and overseas and foster women with high skills for negotiation, conciliation and intermediation. Additionally, based on the Sendai Cooperation Initiative for Disaster Risk Reduction publicized in March 2015, Japan will facilitate women's participation through human resource development, such as training to strengthen women's leadership in reducing disaster risks so that women participate in decision making, on a usual basis, at all stages from disaster prevention, through disaster relief to recovery and reconstruction activities both at the central and local/municipal government levels, and so that assistance and recovery/reconstruction activities are carried out in consideration of the diversity of people and regions.

4. Tracking System and Communications

The implementation status of this strategy will be followed up on when compiling the White Paper on Development Cooperation and exchange of opinions among stakeholders. Additionally, a third-party evaluation will be conducted at an appropriate time and the results will be reflected in deciding future policies as well as in improving the effectiveness and efficiency of projects.

The Government of Japan will fulfill its accountability to explain the significance of development cooperation to the Japanese people and will provide and transmit sufficient information on the achievements of this strategy and international evaluation to ensure transparency toward the international community.