



**Building Resilient Social Platform**  
**“Innovation Challenge Workshops for Women Social Entrepreneurs and Inspiring  
Younger Generations in Kyushu” Project**

**By**  
**Japan Institute for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship (JSIE)**

**1. Purpose of the Project**

This project aims to inspire women social entrepreneurs and inspiring younger generations to lead innovative initiatives to rebuild communities post disaster. Women social entrepreneurs systematically lack access to the social and capital resources that would allow them to grow their initiatives, build networks, and scale their impact. Structural and social challenges are built in a society where women are less encouraged to become leaders and to create or drive social initiatives. Given the lack of women leadership in Japan, and the absence of a collaborative culture of shared knowledge, this project aims to build globally-active networks for women in resilience-building, through intensive social innovation workshops. The project will bring together social business role models from the US and Japan as mentors, who will share their knowledge in building post-disaster or inclusive social enterprises; keys to their success; and personal experiences and strategies applied to overcome obstacles and barriers along the way. The shared dialogue will identify and comprehensively address gender-specific challenges and promote collaborative strategies and leadership.

The Japan Institute for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship (JSIE), a section 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization, will conduct this project in Japan during 2019.

**2. Project Description**

Japan has unfortunate history of recurring natural disasters and subsequent recovery from such disastrous conditions. Women are the hardest hit group when disaster occurs as they are not only vulnerable and economically weak, but also often burdened by traditionally assumed tasks of caregivers and domestic works, yet they are the most salient group in such communities for rebuilding social and community infrastructure. With the right opportunity, we have seen many women and youth groups who have successfully created new businesses, particularly in the disaster-affected areas where such new economic players are desperately in need. Studies from OECD<sup>1</sup> reports show that women leaders have a higher tendency to

---

<sup>1</sup>“Investing Women and Girls” OECD June 2010. <http://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/45704694.pdf>;



invest in social welfare and therefore build broader social capital in their communities. Our research and interviews with experts, including International Institute of Global Resilience, Health and Global Policy Institute, Project Hope, World in Tohoku, and NGOs in Fukushima, show that even though women social entrepreneurs play an important role in community building after a disaster, they systematically lack leadership in access to the social and capital resources that would allow them to grow their initiatives, build networks, and scale their impact. Japan is facing the structural and social challenges where the younger generation and women are less encouraged to take leadership roles and drive new social initiatives.

It is critical to learn leadership and best practices from women leaders in other regions and to share how they have recreated communities and economies during the post-disaster period. However, we have yet to see such cross-border community-building mutual-learning active network where cross pollination of good ideas are encouraged. There is a lack of strong collaborative networks to gain insight into and promote new leadership that is necessary in today's environment of rapid change. Moreover, the region needs more collaborative culture where two similar ideas are working arm-in-arm to achieve collective impact. Ensuring that solutions will tackle social problems requires redefining leadership to emphasize qualities such as empathy, effective collaboration and the ability to organize fluid teams-of-teams, where every player must be a contributor and a leader. Therefore, this project will tackle issues in the region of 1) lack of a supportive environment for women leaders in social entrepreneurial activities in building reliance between peers; and 2) lack of mutual-supportive peer network of social entrepreneurs working to promote long-term community building; and 3) lack of a collaborative effort in sharing best practices across the region to create systemic change and greater value through cross pollination of ideas.

In order to solve the above listed issues, this project will conduct Innovation Challenge workshops in areas of disaster-hit and/or of strong traditional values in Japan to mobilize individuals from the U.S. and Japan, in particular to build a collaborative cross-regional inclusive platform for social entrepreneurs from younger generation and women's perspective in building resilience. The project will bring social entrepreneurs and social enterprise experts from Japan and the U.S. together to share best practices, to walk through key recipes behind their success, and to share the formulas they applied to overcome obstacles and barriers along the way. The platform includes building a collaborative network which will comprehensively identify and address the gender-specific challenges impeding

---

Gender Equality and the MDGs, September 2010. <http://www.oecd.org/dev/development-gender/45987065.pdf>



women from becoming leaders in resilience building. So as to build this platform, this project will conduct Innovation Challenge workshops 1) to share innovative tools, services, best practice models; 2) provide peer mentorship to foster self-confidence and leadership that help to overcome barriers that have excluded younger generations and women from decision-making; and 3) to create an inclusive environment to inspire and to engage exploration and to recreate new values in society. This cross-regional platform will serve as a foundation to nurture mutual support activities and to enhance access to working knowledge and broader resources in the region.

This project focuses on social innovation and entrepreneurship with a long term goal to build globally-active US-Japan network for women and younger generations to take leadership in reconstructing local economy and inclusive communities. Target areas of this project are those that have been affected by disaster and/or have strong traditional values, including Kumamoto (May 2019) and Beppu (August 2019). This project will not only serve to create an important resourceful intangible asset in Japan-US but also have a prospect of creating a broader social capital in the region that can be utilized in a longer term.

### **3. Objective/Outcome**

The overall goal of the Project is to create strong personal ties among US-Japanese-South East Asian (including inspiring) women social entrepreneurs; to share experiences and to discuss a variety of practical solutions that each individual can act upon. The desired short-term outcome is to influence the leadership skills of participants, and to encourage each to take small steps based on inspiration from the workshops organized through the Project. A tangible outcome of this Project will be the network and the number of committed participants in the peer-mentoring program among Japanese, South East Asian, and American talented women social entrepreneurs. The long-term objective is to increase the number of women and younger generations participating in economic and entrepreneurial activities in local communities, so that more explicit opportunities will be given to women and young generations of women. Bringing global perspectives to fairly confined local communities will break a chain of negative cycle of discouragement. By having growing number of female leaders in the communities, the project aims to change societal perceptions from predominantly male-oriented one to a balanced leadership of overall economic revitalization in disaster-affected areas.



#### 4. Methodology

The Project comprises two major components: 1. Organize innovation challenge workshops where participants will present a topic/idea/initiative they would like to build and get a group of peers to support in making the idea presentable; 2. Building a peer-mentoring platform for promoting women and younger generations in post-disaster economies. This project partners with regional and local organizations, including local government, NGOs, venture enterprises, and educational institutions, to build an active collaborative platform to convene, connect, learn, and collaborate on advancing an inclusive environment in resilience building and social entrepreneurship

The following is a proposed timetable and its components for the Project during 2019:

##### ★ Innovation Challenge Workshop for building resilience:

The Project will organize two-day workshops in Kumamoto and Beppu during 2019, predominantly targeting local women and young leaders of various social enterprises. JSIE has secured a support from Kumamoto prefectural government to provide workshop venues for May 2019, and from Asia Pacific University in Beppu to co-organize a workshop in August 2019. JSIE will bring mentors from the U.S. and other parts of Japan to interact with participants during the intensive workshops. This is intended to nurture a ‘working together’ experience with others in a post-disaster setting to collaboratively solve social challenge(s) and aims to promote entrepreneurial spirit, communication capabilities and leadership. The workshop aims to involve 25 to 30 participants, divided into small groups that collaborate, negotiate, and/or communicate with other groups to reach the most effective plans. An intensive two-day group interaction is likely to result in strong ties among participants. The Project will then facilitate informal follow-up meetings and promote participation in the online mentoring network.

#### 5. Budget

Part-time personnel costs for 5 staffs to conduct 2 workshops: \$10,000

Travel costs (2 round US-Japan round trips for 2 staffs & domestic trip for 3 staffs, hotels and local transportation): \$15,000

Honoraria for mentors/speakers/helpers: \$3,000

Catering & food services: 2,000



## 6. About JSIE

JSIE was founded with stated mission to exclusively pursue charitable and educational purposes, with a focus on, among other things, supporting and strengthening cultural bonds, international understanding and collaboration as well as the development of leadership and entrepreneurship through education and research. JSIE is an independent organization with a 501(c)3 with the specific purpose to conduct women and younger generations empowerment projects.

Please see [www.jsie.net/en](http://www.jsie.net/en) (English) or [www.jsie.net](http://www.jsie.net) (Japanese) for JSIE's past activities.

Please contact Hiromi Murakami ([hmurakami@jsie.net](mailto:hmurakami@jsie.net)) for any question you may have for this proposal.