

2025 年 6 月 30 日と 7 月 1 日に、マレーシアの ASEAN 政府間人権委員会（AICHR マレーシア）が、国連開発計画（UNDP）の支援を受けて、マレーシアのクアラルンプールにおいて、「ジェンダーの視点から見るアセアンのビジネスと人権」をテーマにした地域ワークショップを開催しました。このワークショップでは、ビジネスと人権に関する国連指導原則（UNGPs）の実施においてジェンダーの視点を取り入れることの重要性などについて議論が行われましたが、当財団の大野理事長が日本のジェンダー平等の状況に関する特別講演を行いましたので、その内容と当日の写真を掲載します。当財団は、近年、アセアン各国とも連携しつつ「ビジネスと人権」を重要課題として、セミナー等で発信をしてきました。今回の講演も、当財団と AICHR との連携を強化する一環として実施されたものです。

2025 年 6 月 30 日

AICHR ワークショップ 特別講演

公益財団法人国際民商事法センター
理事長 大野 恒太郎

Insights from Japan on the Gender Lens Perspective in Business and Human Rights ～Japan and ASEAN Collaboration in the Field of Business and Human Rights～



1. Introduction

Thank you, Chairperson.

I am grateful for this opportunity to participate in the AICHR Regional Workshop on Gender Lens Perspective on Business and Human Rights in ASEAN.

2. Japan's Gender Lens Perspective on Business and Human Rights

First, I would like to describe current conditions in Japan as an example for your reference.

Japan's constitution adopted after the Second World War declared the principle of equal rights for men and women.

However, traditional attitudes on gender roles remained firmly entrenched in Japan. Society continued to affirm a division of roles where “men were expected to go out to work, while women remained home to care for the family.” Therefore, the protection of women was prioritized in many of our older laws. For example, Japan had regulations that prohibited women from engaging in late-night work.

The first working day in the New Year (Jan. 1984)



2

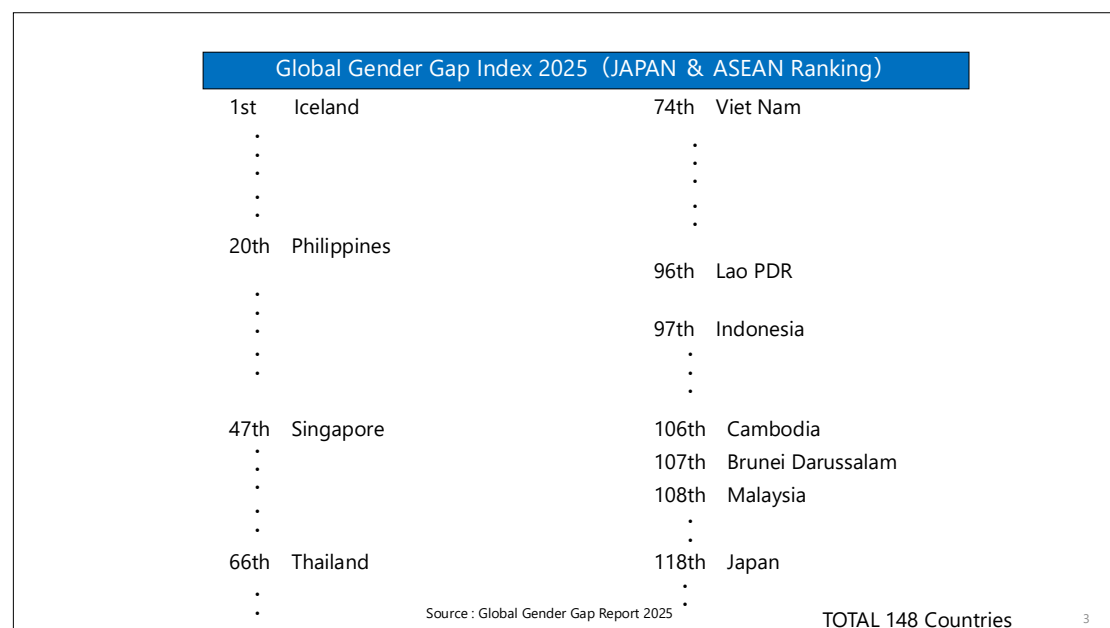
This is a photo taken at my office about forty years ago on the “first workday of the year.” You may notice that there were very few female staff

members, and that they were dressed in festive attire, kimono. In those days, women were looked upon as “flowers decorating the workplace,” and they were not really expected to do productive work. Female staff members were also supposed to leave the workplace upon getting married.

But as more women began to pursue higher education, an increasing number of female workers were no longer satisfied with such ornamental roles. Instead, they sought opportunities to realize their full potential in society. In 1985, Japan ratified the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The following year, Japan implemented the Equal Employment Opportunity Law. This marked a turning point and the social advancement of women officially started.

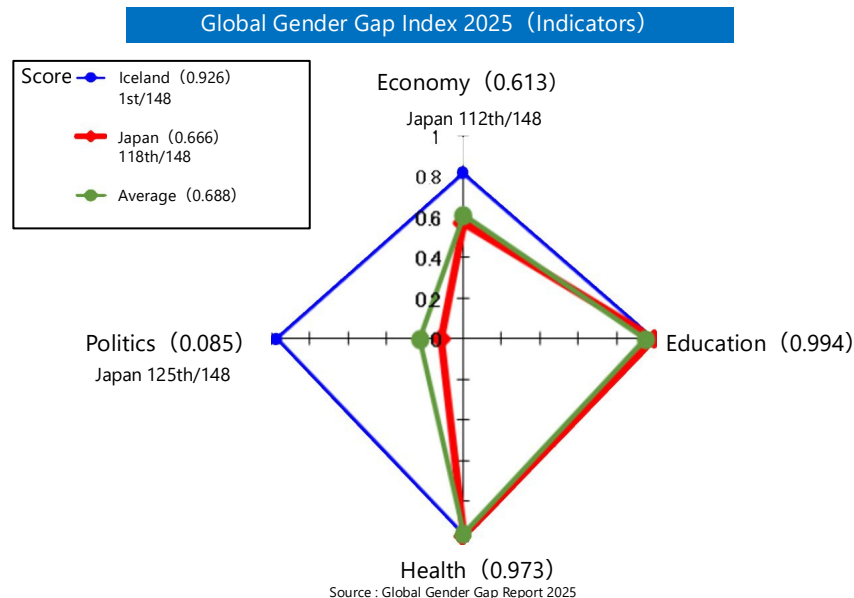
In the years that followed, various revisions were made to existing laws to eliminate discrimination against women in such areas as employment opportunity, job content and description, and promotion. As a result of these steps, we began to see steady progress in the social status of women in Japan.

Notwithstanding these advances, international comparisons indicate that Japan still lags considerably behind other countries.

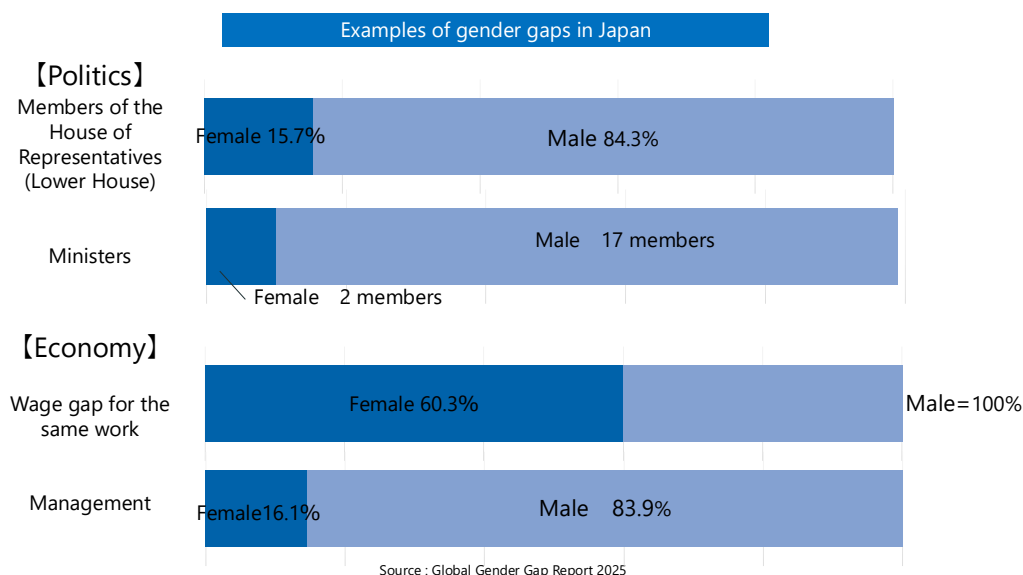


This slide shows the World Economic Forum’s global gender gap index for 2025. According to this, Japan ranks 118th among 148 countries in the

world. As you can see, Japan ranks below all ASEAN countries that appear in this ranking.



As shown in the slide, the gender gap index is computed based on scores in the four key dimensions of economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment.



The largest factor that lowers Japan's global ranking is the participation of women in politics. For instance, women account for only 15.7 percent of the House of Representatives, the lower house of the Japanese parliament.

Similarly, Japan does not score well in economy. Women make up only 16.1 percent of all senior officials and managers.

Why has gender equality not been achieved despite its guarantee under the Constitution and related laws?



It is because various factors persist in Japan's work culture that obstruct women from continuing to work and advancing their careers. These factors include long working hours and male-centric workplace practices, such as frequent drinking parties after work. Given that lifetime employment remains deeply rooted in Japan, such practices make it difficult for women, particularly women with children, to compete with men and to climb to the executive positions.

Up to this point, I have been reviewing the current situation of gender equality in Japan.

"For the social advancement of women"



Source : <https://kenkokeiei.mynavi.jp/step/20230405-1>

7

Now, I would like to outline the measures that Japan is taking for the social advancement of women.

Japan has been experiencing a low birth rate and aging society, which has led to a sharp decline in our working population in recent years. As a result, there is a pressing need to further increase the social participation of women. Therefore, the government has adopted this as a priority policy target, which we cannot afford to postpone.

From the perspective of creating an environment that more effectively supports the social advancement of women, various measures have been taken in pursuit of workstyle reforms affecting both men and women. A recent example is the expansion of remote work, a development that was accelerated by the COVID pandemic.



At home, men are being called on to play a more active role in performing household tasks, including participation in childcare and caring for elderly parents. Changes are now becoming visible. The paternity leave system is a good example. When it was first introduced twenty years ago, the ratio of men taking paternity leave was nearly zero. However, as of 2023, the ratio had risen to thirty percent, and it continues to rise.

To enable both parents to work, Japan has rapidly developed nursery school services where children can be left during the day.

A variety of measures are also being implemented to increase the number of women in management posts. As a result, we are seeing the steady emergence of women in top leadership positions across organizations.

On the other hand, the ongoing dramatic changes in social awareness of gender equality have highlighted certain problems that did not necessarily receive sufficient attention in the past. An example of this is sexual harassment in the workplace.



Source: DAILY SPORTS WEB SITE JAN.17th 2025
<https://www.daily.co.jp/gossip/2025/01/27/0018587304.shtml?ph=1>

9

This is a photo from a press conference held in January of this year by a leading television broadcasting company for the purpose of apologizing to the public. It was widely reported that a popular television celebrity had been accused of sexually assaulting a female TV announcer employed by this company. It was found that the company had a long-standing practice of assigning female employees to participate in entertaining important clients. Moreover, the female announcer filed a complaint with the company after the assault, but the company had failed to take appropriate action. The company faced a strong outcry after these revelations. Subsequently, all corporate sponsors withdrew their commercials from the company, and its top executives were forced to resign.

The rights of foreign workers, including women, were discussed at last year's AICHR meeting in Bangkok. In Japan, a number of related laws are being revised from the perspective of a country that accepts foreign workers,

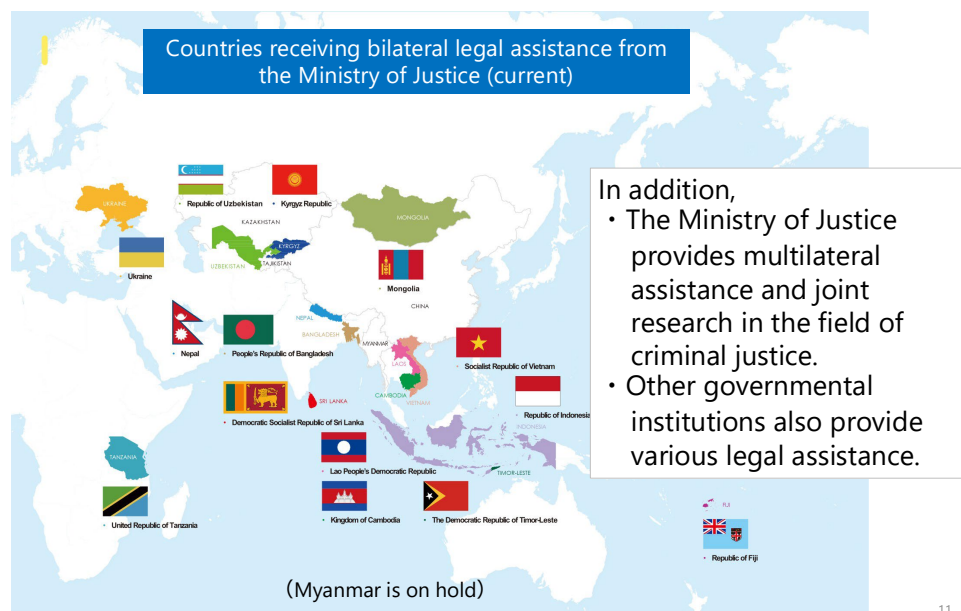


Women's social participation is now regarded as the most important measure for the realization of a "society where no one is left behind." Bearing this in mind, Japan's National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights (NAP) is being revised this year to include gender equality as a priority goal.

It is also notable that gender equality has come to have a significant impact on businesses. For example, companies that have no women on their board of directors have experienced a sharp decline in the percentage of supporting votes cast in their general shareholders meetings. In contrast, active engagement in achieving gender equality is being acknowledged and appreciated as a positive factor in raising the value of the goods and services of the company.

This concludes my review of Japan as an example of a gender lens perspective on business and human rights.

3. Japan and ASEAN Cooperation – Legal Systems Development Support and Business and Human Rights –



As a peaceful nation, Japan has constantly repeated the appeal that a rules-based, free and fair economic order serves as the foundation for global prosperity and peace. Based on this commitment and belief, Japan has provided support for the development of legal systems in ASEAN and other Asian countries for more than thirty years.

The objective of providing such development support is to establish a solid legal foundation needed for realizing economic development.



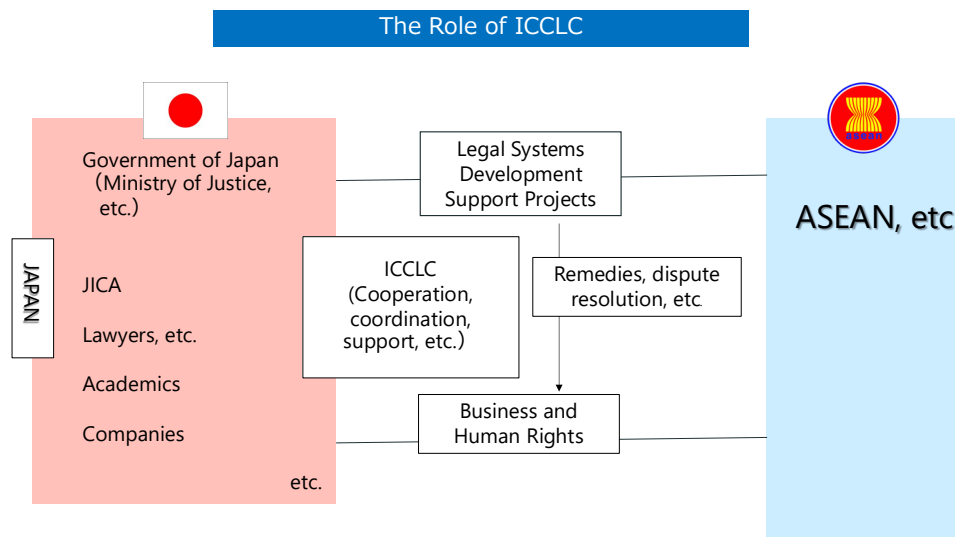
This is achieved by supporting the receiving country in facilitating necessary legislation, improving legal practices, and nurturing the human resources required for operating these legal processes.

You, the ASEAN countries, have made steady progress in developing your legal systems through untiring efforts. Moreover, in recent years, you have achieved remarkable success in economic development.

In this environment, the question of how to respond to human rights problems arising in connection to business activities is attracting greater attention. No one can sacrifice the human rights of others for the sake of economic development. This is the fundamental principle that underlies the subject of business and human rights.

Japan has been collaborating with the ASEAN countries for the realization of the rule of law in Asia through its past and ongoing development support. In the years ahead, we look forward to advancing together with the ASEAN countries in the spirit of equal partnership to achieve further improvements in business and human rights as they relate deeply to Japanese companies operating abroad.

4. The ICCLC Foundation and 30th Anniversary Symposium



13

The International Civil and Commercial Law Centre Foundation (ICCLC) that I represent was founded in 1996 and is supported by its members comprising major Japanese corporations, law offices and others.

The Foundation has worked closely with the Ministry of Justice, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and other government agencies, as well as with lawyers and other experts, and with academia to facilitate our development support and understanding of business laws in Asia.

2023 Summer "Business and Human Rights" Symposium in Tokyo



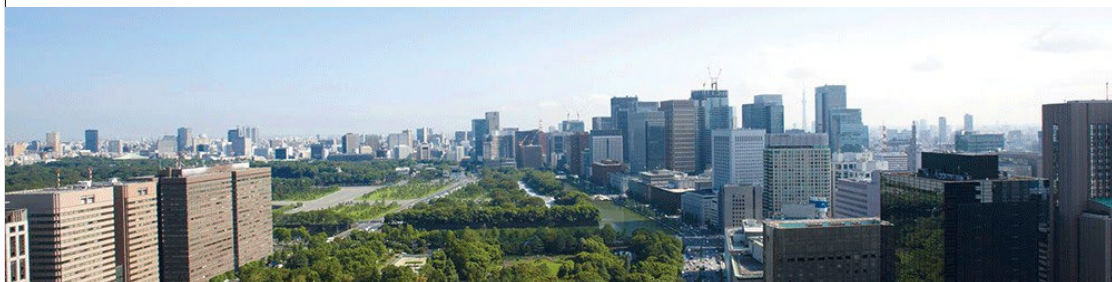
14

The Foundation is also involved in activities related to business and human rights. For instance, during 2023, together with the Ministry of Justice and JICA, we held a symposium about business and human rights and legal systems development support.



Japan and ASEAN Collaboration in the Field of
Business and Human Rights

ICCLC 30th Anniversary 2026 TOKYO



Next year, the ICCLC Foundation will be celebrating the 30th anniversary of its establishment. I am pleased to inform you that to mark this milestone, we will be hosting an international symposium in Tokyo on Business and Human Rights, and we hope to widely disseminate the contents of the discussions.

In closing, I would like to reiterate that we are committed to further deepening our collaboration with the ASEAN countries for the betterment of business and human rights.

I thank you again for this opportunity to address this meeting.

