

Closing the Gender Gap in Japan: Achievements, Challenges, and Prospects

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Asako Osaki, Director of Gender Action Platform and Visiting Professor from Kwansai Gakuin University, School of Public Policy Studies, led a lunchtime talk titled “Closing the Gender Gap in Japan: Achievements, Challenges, and Prospects.” The discussion was moderated by Dr. Yumiko Shimabukuro, Director of the Urban and Social Policy Program at the School of International and Public Affairs and Faculty Advisor for Empowering Asian Women at Columbia University. Professor Osaki discussed gender equality as a global, economic imperative, arguing that, when women are economically empowered, they impact their households, communities, and future generations. She explored how economic growth is linked to economic equality worldwide and detailed the political and economic impact of gender equality in Japan specifically. She contrasted the country’s discriminatory, institutionalized gender policies against recent women’s advancement initiatives from Prime Minister Abe, whose economic policy package known as Abenomics included women’s advancement as a priority for the first time in Japan’s history. Professor Osaki addressed the need for the Japanese government to align its domestic laws and policies with global standards and accelerate their efforts to reverse the gender inequality entrenched in society as well. She pointed out the important role played by civil society, particularly by the youth.

