

Japanese Women Leading the Way. Newsweek. Retrieved on 23 February 2018 from:
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The Newsweek logo consists of the word "Newsweek" in a white, bold, sans-serif font, set against a solid red rectangular background.The graphic features the words "PASSION" and "INNOVATION" in a large, multi-colored, sans-serif font. The letters are filled with various colors including pink, blue, orange, green, and yellow. A pink ampersand "&" is positioned between the two words, overlapping the letters.

Womenomics has become one of the most important policy pillars for sustainable economic growth in Japan. It is designed to empower women to achieve their maximum potential by reforming the labor market, encouraging companies to embrace diversity, promoting vocational skills and expanding availability of child care services. Womenomics continues to transform Japan, injecting new vitality into business, government and society at large. In Japan, the number of women joining the workforce increased by about 1.5 million in the past five years alone, and more women are taking leadership roles in all facets of the economy. Japanese women are also making significant contributions around the globe. The three women showcased here are outstanding examples of empowered women in Japan. They are leading the way, through their passion, innovative ideas and willingness to disrupt society in order to bring dynamic change for the better, which many Japanese women share.

JAPAN IS PROUD TO SUPPORT THE LEADERSHIP OF WOMEN AT HOME AND AROUND THE WORLD.



Lin Kobayashi JAPAN GOV

LIN KOBAYASHI / EDUCATION DISRUPTOR

“We believe in leaders who can transform society,” says Lin Kobayashi, founder of the International School of Asia, Karuizawa. She believes that the best education happens with a diverse student body and staff, so ISAK students hail from all over the world, and from various socio-economic backgrounds, and the school offers scholarships to underprivileged students. Kobayashi has been thinking about what makes an “ideal education” for decades. She attended a prestigious high school in Japan, then accepted a scholarship for an international boarding school in Canada affiliated with United World Colleges, which recruits students from 159 countries. “International schools tend to have a majority of students from wealthy backgrounds,” she notes. “But UWC reaches out to refugee camps—or all across India and remote villages in the Himalayas—to bring a true sense of diversity.” Another turning point in her life came when she and a school friend visited Mexico City. “Her family took me to a slum, and I still remember the heat and humidity and the smell, and kids running around almost naked and adults sniffing glue. I had never experienced such extreme poverty. I never thought of myself as

wealthy, but I realized I'm one of the top several percent in the world fortunate enough to go to school and have a house. It made an immense impact on me." That was why she majored in development economics at the University of Tokyo, then got a master's degree in international education policy analysis from Stanford. After college, Kobayashi worked with UNICEF, creating informal education programs for street children in the Philippines. The wealth disparity in the Philippines convinced her that "educating the poor is very important, but unless we educate the next generation of change-makers, we're not tackling the root causes."



Aska Hamakawa JAPAN GOV

ASKA HAMAKAWA / SOCIAL ACCELERATOR

In 2004, Aska Hamakawa witnessed the devastating effects of climate change on the poor in Samoa. She was staying in a remote village where "the traditional culture was rich, nature was abundant, people were lively and very knowledgeable about how to live. Their living was so down-to-earth, it made me contemplate on how our lives in the advanced countries have become so unhuman. I felt like I saw the secret byproduct of the economic development in our

parts of the world, this major flaw of the conventional capitalistic economy, where for one to flourish, another has to suffer, and injustice that in most cases the victims of this problem were not the emitters but the ones that almost had no contribution to the cause.” Five years after her initial trip to Samoa, Hamakawa returned to the island nation to manage recovery efforts following its 2009 earthquake and tsunami, and two years after that, she organized relief work in the northeastern region of Japan struck by a tsunami. In 2014, Hamakawa and her husband, Tomo, launched their nonprofit, Earth Company, which incubates social ideas and mentors grassroots change-makers known as Impact Heroes. “We look for people who not only serve as agents of hope for their own community, but who are capable of inspiring others,” Hamakawa says. Today, Hamakawa continues to lead the way through her positive actions.

EMI TAMAKI, TECH INNOVATOR

Emi Tamaki is a pioneer in the sometimes surreal efforts to bring the sense of human touch to virtual reality. She was a co-founder H2L Inc. in Tokyo, which sells UnlimitedHand, a device that seamlessly translates human movements into a game environment. In 2011, Tamaki, an associate professor of engineering at Waseda University in Tokyo, introduced PossessedHand, which controls the human hand by applying electrical stimulus to muscles in the forearm. The possible applications include teaching someone to play musical instruments or operate machinery. PossessedHand was inspired by a challenging personal experience: Tamaki had a heart condition growing up and was sometimes stuck in a hospital bed. “I wasn’t able to enjoy various experiences,” she explains. “The benefit [of PossessedHand] is to allow people to get the worldwide experience despite a physical barrier.” Tamaki knows that there are barriers to women in the tech industry, such as gender bias and sexual harassment, as reported globally, but she has a solution: “Women should establish their own communities, where they can help one another and offer different perspectives. And we shouldn’t let any ‘wall’ get in our way.” Tamaki is now conducting research in “body-sharing” technology that would enable an individual to experience someone else’s movements.



Emi Tamaki JAPAN GOV

THE POWER OF WOMENOMICS

Japan knows that having women in positions of power ensures that businesses remain innovative and competitive. That's why the number of female board members of listed companies in that country is on steadily increasing: In 2003, there were 204 female board members compared with 1,388 in 2016. And, in the past five years, the number of women joining the workforce in Japan increased by 1.5 million.

In April 2016, the country enacted "The Act on Promotion of Women's Participation and Advancement in the Workplace." The goal of this plan—dubbed "womenomics" by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe—is to provide equal opportunity for women so their careers can thrive, even in the years when they're likely to become mothers. The government hopes that by 2020 it will all but eliminate the waitlists for child care by expanding public services to accommodate an additional 320,000 children. The government also supports further encouraging recurrent education for women away on maternity leave and providing female

candidates with executive leadership training programs from the world's leading business scholars.

"Women bring to corporate management certain perspectives that only women can provide," Abe said. "Diversified organizations are able to provide society with new types of added value." He also said, "If 'Lehman Brothers' was 'Lehman Brothers and Sisters,' they might still be around."