

## **The 35th Mitsui Life Symposium: ‘Toward ‘Diversity Innovation’**

**December 6, 2023**

### **Summary of Panel Discussion**

The format for the 35<sup>th</sup> symposium was an online panel discussion with a moderator and the topic was innovations that can improve gender diversity in Japan. Accordingly, all three panelists and the moderator were women (see next page) who held senior executive positions in Japan and as expected, it resulted in an open, stimulating, and informative discussion.

Although the labor force participation rate of women in Japan now exceeds that of the United States, many Japanese women are not full-time employees; moreover, although the number of years women work is not much different from men, the ratio of women in management positions is much lower than that of men. Government initiatives such as the *Basic Law for Gender Equal Society* (1999) and the *2020-30 target* set in 2003 (to increase the percentage of women in leadership positions in all sectors of society to at least 30% by 2020) have not been successful as conceded by the government itself.

One panelist is optimistic that, unlike in the past, in the 2020s (as the population continues to decline), women will be indispensable, especially at the executive level. Thus, the target for women's advancement can be achieved. However, in order to achieve this, the problems that have hindered women's advancement in the past must be resolved. In the panelists' opinion, the main reasons for the continued gender disparity in senior leadership positions are (i) the male-centric work culture; (ii) the so-called Mommy Track (women returning to the workplace after child birth for low-responsibility jobs without chances of promotion to executive positions); and (iii) women's reluctance to seek executive positions. The panelists recommendations for improving the gender diversity include: (i) setting higher expectations for women which has been found to improve their performance and hence their potential for executive positions; (ii) weaken the “mommy track” culture by lowering women's burden of housework and childcare and by encouraging men, for example, to take advantage of parental leave; and (iii) encourage firms to

establish clear career development paths and processes for women. As one panelist commented, “when women shine, men shine too.”

**Moderator: Tsuneko Murata**

Tsuneko Murata has many years of responsible experience in legal affairs, compliance, risk management and CSR as Senior Councilor & General Manager at Panasonic. In 2014, after retiring from Panasonic, Tsuneko was appointed as Executive Director of Japan Pension Service (JPS) and in 2016, Standing Statutory Auditor of JPS. Since 2018 served as an outside director of several companies, currently serves as an outside director of 4 listed companies such as TOKYO SEIMITSU CO., LTD (Semiconductor Manufacturing Equipment), MILBON Co., Ltd. (Hair Care Product), Kakuyasu Group Co., Ltd. (Beverage & Food commercial retail), and Sun Frontier Fudousan Co., Ltd. (real estate), with the Certified Fraud Examiner Qualifications.

**Panelists****Reiko Amano**

Reiko Amano was fascinated by dam construction and joined Japan's largest construction company, Kajima Corporation in 1980 as the first female civil engineering professional. Contrary to her expectations, she was not assigned to the job. However, she has risen through the ranks with remarkable achievements in the Research and Development and the design of concrete bridges in the Civil Engineering Design Division. After serving as General Manager of the Civil Engineering Department of the Civil Engineering Management Division, she retired from Kajima Corporation after serving as General Manager of the Intellectual Property Department. She has since served in a couple of corporate executive positions and is currently a director of East Japan Railway Company.

**Yumiko Jozuka**

Yumiko Jozuka has been the President of the Japan Institute for Women's Empowerment & Diversity Management since 2023. Yumiko joined the Ministry of Labor (now the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare) in 1984 and has worked as a policymaker on issues such as the Equal Employment Opportunity Law, the Gender Equality Plan, and women's activities. She retired from the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare in 2020 and has served in her current position as well as on the boards of several listed companies.

**Machiko Miyai**

Director and Managing Executive Officer of Morinaga Seika Kaisha (a confectionery company), Ltd. Machiko was the first female general manager of a business unit in Panasonic with global responsibility for the cookware business. Later, she became in charge of environmental policy for the entire Panasonic Group as the first female director and general manager of the Environmental Division. She has also served as an outside director of Morinaga Seika (Confectionery), Yoshinoya Holdings (Restaurant Chain), and Kato Industry (trading company), a member of the Personal Information Protection Committee of the Cabinet Office, a member of the Industrial Technology Strategy Council of Wakayama Prefecture, and a part-time lecturer at Osaka City University.