

Innovation Nippon the 4th Symposium 2013

Women and Innovation Networking

Date : March 14, 2014

Venue: ITOKI Tokyo Innovation Center SYNQA

Wing (Women and Innovation Networking) was established on December 2013 as a part of the project "Innovation Nippon" which has been jointly promoted by GLOCOM and Google to deliver the message that "Women will take the initiative in innovation in the 21st Century." After establishment, it conducted a survey and workshop centering on the themes of women and ICT & innovation, then held the Wing Symposium at ITOKI Tokyo Innovation Center on March 14, 2014 with the aim of networking among people who share an awareness of the issues, as well as reporting the results of studies by publicizing the contents of the discussion. It was organized by Innovation Nippon and backed by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry.

At the symposium, Seiko Noda, a member of the House of Representatives who worked as a chairperson of the LDP General Council at the time made a keynote speech. Ms. Noda said, "Women's involvement in economic activity is the last fortress to recover Japanese economy," and showed her commitment as a member of the controlling political party to work for providing more opportunities for women. Ms. Noda who is familiar with ICT policy, also said, "I hope that ICT will be utilized for connecting women's idea to new business." As for starting a new business, while citing a rule that a constant rate of governmental procurement in U.S. has been allocated to women-owned companies, she emphasized the need of tackling this problem as a growth strategy from the political and governmental sides.

Next, Ms. Miki Iwamura, Marketing Director, Google Japan Inc. made a speech and introduced Google's approach that it should "Hire and retain diverse personnel and develop their careers." Under this program called "G Career," at the hiring phase, those staff who "have more than 5-year careers and have not worked for more than 1 year due to child nursing or family nursing" are engaged in work for 30 hours/week for 20 weeks. At the Retain and Development phase, a group called "Women@google" for employees to support each other is deployed. As for outside the company, she mentioned their approach to provide support for women starting business or opportunities to experience technologies using the keyword "Women + Tech."

Subsequently, a panel discussion was convened. Ms. Kaoru Sunada, Executive Research Fellow, Center for Global Communications, International University of Japan,

served as a moderator and Ms. Yuka Watanabe, President of FabLab Kamakura LLC, Makiko Miyajima, Executive Board Member of NPO Yokohama Community Design Laboratory, and Mika Yasuoka, Visiting Fellow of Copenhagen IT University and GLOCOM, and Ms. Kana Kobayashi, Economic and Social Policy Office, Economic and Industrial Policy Bureau, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry took the rostrum as panelists.

First, each panelist made a presentation. Ms. Watanabe said that FabLab will focus on human development and the sharing of international values in the future and pointed that especially in the latter, there is a problem of low representation of women. Ms. Miyajima said that she had a lot of opportunities to meet women who are providing support for child nursing and job assistance for young people through her experience in local community. She emphasized the importance for men to communicate with such women without protesting even if they still feel it different culture. Ms. Yasuoka made a presentation on the reasons for Northern Europe's top ranking in the IT index, etc., attributing it to two perspectives of participatory design and utilization of women. Ms. Kobayashi introduced some approaches such as "100 selections of diversity starting business" as a policy related to promotion the participation of women, which is one of METI's growth strategies. Finally, through discussion, the participants confirmed that the activation of women will be an important factor in economic policy in Japan in the 21st century and diversity will be a key for promoting innovation in a knowledge economy.