

JOCV's Report on Gender Situation and Campaign to Promote Early Discovery of Childhood Cancer

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February 15th is International Childhood Cancer Day. In Japan, in relation to this day, support organizations for childhood cancer patients and their families proceed an international campaign together in order to encourage early discovery of childhood cancer mainly in developing countries. Due to the lack of early diagnosis, access to information and effective treatment system and care for childhood cancer patients in developing countries, 70 – 90% of the patients lose their lives. One of the fundamental approaches to eliminate the gap of survival rate between developing and developed countries is said to be early discovery of the disease.

I am planning to prepare sensitization goods and cards in their daily languages, Uzbek and Russian in order to raise awareness of people in Uzbekistan about the situation of childhood cancer.

The term of Young Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteer (JOCV) is two years. The volunteer members in Uzbekistan are dispatched to medical / education / welfare / tourism organizations in different part of the country. I plan to launch a campaign to promote early discovery of childhood cancer through which sensitization goods are distributed by way of the organizations where JOCV members are working.

Now I would like to report about the gender related situations collected from JOCV members in Uzbekistan.

<Volunteer of Japanese Language Education>

It is difficult to describe what views toward gender exist in Uzbekistan in one sentence, because it is said that there are about 130 ethnic groups and each of them has its own way of thinking. As for the difference between Russians' and Uzbeks', they are as different as day is from night. Uzbek men hardly marry older women while Russian men do not mind age matter.

Uzbek women are very conservative in terms of social participation and marrying age and their ideal model is to marry young and become a housewife. To the contrary, Russian women are positive to be independent and think women can marry whenever they wish to, which is close to modern Japanese women's attitude.

As such, there is a difference among ethnic groups and in addition to that, there are different views by generations or homelands. In general, young generation from big cities is more liberal regarding gender perspective and people from rural areas are more conservative.

Nevertheless, there is something common shared by many ethnic groups, generations, homelands and religions: "macho culture." Men should be strong, should not fuss over details." People expect men to show "masculinity" in every occasion. This is common for most of ethnic groups and is free from the times and provinces.

In summary, if I was to speak out without a fear of being mistaken about "gender

view in Uzbekistan,” women are relatively flexible to change their attitude according to the time while men are more conservative to a change and those who do not have social status have lost themselves. This tendency is also fluid, however, it may change as time passes.

<Volunteer of Tourism>

January 14th is the important national celebration day called “Vatan himoyachilari kuni (Day of Fatherland Defenders)” although it is not a holiday. In a broader sense, the fatherland defenders mean all men, so it is regarded as the day to be grateful to men. It seems, therefore, that January 14th is the day when women send gifts to show their appreciation to men. Some say that this is in return for the “Women’s Day” of March 8th when men send gifts to women as a token of their gratitude.

<Volunteer of Youth Activities>

- 1) A telephone call for one of my colleague: “What are you doing? Come home now and do housework!”
- 2) Words said by a Uzbek woman in her 50’s: “I wish my son will marry very soon. I am sick of household chores.”

That is, housework is married women’s duty. I still remember an Uzbek woman’s surprising face when she saw a Japanese man wash dishes. The perception that a wife must handle all house chores is a strong mindset. At workplace it is easy to take a day off, probably because they highly value private life compared to Japanese. I can say that it is friendly to working mothers.

<Volunteer of PC Instructor>

Men work outside only, but women work both outside and at home. For this reason, I have the impression that women work longer hours from early in the morning till late at night.

At elementary or junior high schools where I work, more male teachers deal with higher grades and more female teachers handle lower grades. Moreover, men and women do not take meals together at a wedding or workplace gathering. Older generation spend leisure time with the same gender.