

*KFAW Report*

## **Reports on KFAW Research Activities at the 20<sup>th</sup> Kitakyushu Conference on Asian Women**

The Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women (KFAW) holds the Kitakyushu Conference on Asian Women every fall. The 20th Conference was organized under the theme “Women Now in the World—Viewing the World from Kitakyushu” on November 28th and 29th, 2009. On the second day, a KFAW researcher and KFAW visiting researchers and their co-researchers reported on the results of their research and exchanged opinions with participants. The abstracts of the presentations are as follows.

### **1. Achievements and Challenges in Promotion of Female Education: A Case of Kerala, India by Masako Ota \***

The State of Kerala, which is located in the southwest of India, stretches south-north and faces the Arabian Sea. It is endowed with rich greenery and is popular as a tropical resort among tourists. It is also widely known as the “Kerala Model” in the field of Development Studies. This is because Kerala has achieved a high level of social development in such fields as education and health, despite being at a low level of economic development.

Life expectancy at birth for India is 62.6 years for men and 64.2 years for women, while Kerala records 71.4 years for men and 76.3 years for women. The infant mortality rate for India is 55 per thousand live births. The corresponding figure for Kerala is 13, which is lower than that of Brazil (31) and Russia (14). In particular, the high achievements in education are noteworthy. Almost all boys and girls in Kerala are enrolled in primary school and only 3% do not complete ten years of education.<sup>(1)</sup> The literacy rates are 94.2% for men and 87.9% for women, which is equivalent to levels in Singapore. In India as a whole, around six out of ten children drop out of school before reaching the 10th standard. The literacy rate is 65% and the gap in the rates between men and women is as high as 18.3%.<sup>(2)</sup>

The backgrounds to these high achievements have already been reported by many researchers. They point out four main reasons. Firstly, rulers of Princely States were very keen to educate people. Secondly, during the same period, Christian missionaries promoted education, especially education for girls. Thirdly, the matrilineal system of

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<sup>(1)</sup> Ten years of education means completion of high school. At the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, students take a board examination which is considered as an important qualification in the Indian education system.

<sup>(2)</sup> Sources: UNDP (2008) *Human Development Report 2007/08*. New York: UNDP. and Ministry of Finance, Government of India (2009) *Economic Survey 2008-2009*. New Delhi: Government of India.

inheritance was widely practiced: it attached importance to girls as well as boys. Fourthly, after independence, the Communist party took office and aimed to establish an equal society by vigorously pushing through land reforms and social policies, including education and health.

There is no doubt about the high level of female education achieved in Kerala in terms of various educational indicators. However, an attempt was made to research on the present issues in female education, the changes education has brought about for women, and what challenges remain in realizing a gender-equal society. For this objective, fieldwork was conducted in Kerala for nine days in September 2009 through visits and interviews with officers of the Education Department, Government of Kerala, teachers and students of government and private schools from the pre-primary level to higher education, researchers on gender and staff of NGOs working with women.<sup>(3)</sup>

In these interviews, many people responded that there are no differences between men and women in Kerala, but challenges similar to those women in Japan and other countries are facing appeared to exist. The educational level of women in Kerala has become higher, and more women have started working outside the home. Both single and married women are now in the workforce not only in Kerala, but also in other states and overseas. As a result, women's economic power has been recognized. This has led to an increase in their mobility and changes in expectations and conditions in the marriage market.

Nonetheless, there remain deep-rooted conservative cultures and practices, such as the male-dominated society, rigid gender-roles, and a marriage system which favors men. Furthermore, women who want to pursue careers are struggling with expectations on economic contributions and balancing work both outside and within the household. This is a similar situation to the one that many women in the world are facing at present.

When asked about the future development of gender issues in Kerala, one female researcher said,

*“Unless men change, the situation will not change.”*

It takes a long to transform society. However, in order to realize a gender-equal society, everyone, men and women alike, has to make efforts to become aware of gender issues. It is of vital importance for the Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women to continue its activities towards the creation of a just society by developing linkages with women in Asia and other regions.

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<sup>(3)</sup> Under the research theme of this fiscal year, “Empowerment of Women in Asia,” visits were made to the states of Kerala and Andhra Pradesh in India. The survey in Kerala was a part of a research project which was headed by Associate Professor Noriko Hattori of Hyogo University of Teacher Education and funded by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Japan.

## 2. Child Health under Conflict and Disaster Condition in Sri Lanka from the Point of View of Gender by Ikuko Seki\* and Naomi Imamura\*\*

All over the world marginalized women and children suffer injury and death resulting from war. Despite the fact that children are the next generation, such tragedies occur all around the globe. War and natural disaster alters the nature of community and family, and we believe that this disruption in lifestyle affects the mental and physical health of children.

Nurses involved in international rescue tend to focus on the health of adults who can make pleas themselves; however, they need to pay their attention to the mental health of children, because children are affected by their environment but are incapable of making pleas themselves.

Therefore, in July of 2009, we conducted a survey of junior high school students in Trincomalee District in the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. It was six months after the end of the 25-year war was declared and approximately five years after the 2004 Sumatra earthquake and tsunami occurred. In our presentation, we report on the results of the survey as well as general information on Sri Lanka.

### General Information on Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka, previously known as Ceylon, means “resplendent land.” In 5th century B.C. Sinhalese migrated from north India and established kingdoms. In the beginning of the 16th century, it was colonized by Portugal, Holland, and England. Sri Lanka obtained their independence from England in 1948. Conflicts between Hindu Tamils and Buddhist Sinhalese have been occurring since the second century, and continued throughout the kingdom period and colonization period. Such conflicts still remain today, complicated by the additional post-independence ideological conflicts.

Map 1. Map of Sri Lanka



Sri Lanka is located in south Asia, 7,500 km west of Japan. It has a total area of approximately 65,600 km<sup>2</sup> (thirteen times the size of Fukuoka Prefecture) and a population of approximately 20 million (four times that of Fukuoka Prefecture). The form of government is a republic. Its capital is Sri Jayewardenepura Kotte, but its

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administrative center lies in Colombo. The climate is tropical monsoon. Its major industries are agriculture and textiles. Its main commodity is black tea and it is the third largest producer of tea in the world.

The main ethnic groups are Sinhalese, Tamils, and Sri Lanka Moors. Its main languages are Sinhala, Tamil, and English. Its school system consists of five years of primary school, four years of secondary school and two years of higher secondary school, two years of high school, and four years of university education. Compulsory education is eleven years, for which the school attendance rate is 90%.

Sri Lanka is divided into nine provinces and 25 districts. Trincomalee District is located on the eastern coast.

Table 1. Health indicators for Sri Lanka and Japan

	GDP per capita (US\$)	Life expectancy (years)	Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	Under-five mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	Maternity mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births)	Immunization against measles/DPT (%)
Sri Lanka	4,595	71.6	12	14	58	98
Japan	31,267	82.3	3	4	6	98

Sources: UNDP (2006), Human Development Report 2007/08, WHO (2009), World Health Statistics 2009.

### 3. Transnational Migration from Southeast Asia to East Asia and the Transformation of Reproductive Labor by Reiko Ogawa\*, Frank Tsen-Yung Wang†, Hsiao Chun, Hannah‡, Liu, and Kim Eunshil§

The three countries and regions in East Asia namely Korea, Taiwan, Province of China and Japan have a great similarity in terms of population demography : low fertility rate and aging society . The change in demographic structure and other factors has lead to the recent transnational flow of migration from Southeast Asia to supplement the shortage of workers both in productive and reproductive labor . This phenomenon is particularly salient in the field of reproductive labor where the ‘importing’ of the body of the Southeast Asian women either in the form of international marriage and/or care workers is taking place . East Asia has become a migration market for the Southeast Asians through two dynamics <feminization of migration > and <globalization of reproductive work > where the care work has increasingly becoming shouldered by migrant women. The research aims to compare the policy, institutions and discourses among Korea,

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Taiwan, Province of China and Japan as well as the social support systems for migrant women and problematize how these societies deal with care and reproductive labor under the demographic transformation.

Compared to the Western countries where the migrants encompass different sectors of the society, East Asia has a shorter experience in receiving migrants. The issue of human rights and citizenship of migrants is also an emerging issue but has not yet being widely discussed as part of the political agenda. While the migration streams are both the reflections of structural conditions in the capitalist economy and individual decision of migrants, it is equally important to recognize that gender differences in migration are the outcome of different gender roles that has been constructed in determining which occupations male and female are likely to enter.

In Japan, since the 1980s a large number of 'entertainers' were introduced under the 'entertainment visa' which brought contestation especially among feminist groups that the system wittingly allows human trafficking and sexual exploitation. After 20 years, many ex-entertainers are settled as wives and mothers of Japanese nationals and now increasingly turning into care work as a more socially respectable occupation. While the ex-entertainers are struggling to shift from entertainment to care work, a new batch of nurses and caregivers from Southeast Asia started entering Japan under the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) underpinned by different logic of promoting free trade. Mediated by the state, care work now became a frontier of globalization without reflection on the gendered nature of the state.

In Taiwan, Province of China, there is a strong discourse in maintaining 'family care' and care for one's elderly is seen as a major doctrine in traditional Chinese family ethics. By allocating 'care' in the private sphere, the state minimizes its role in the provision of elder care which paved the way for care to go to the market. Since 1992 the importation of migrant household workers has become a source of cheapest and affordable care due to the retrenchment of the state expenditure in establishing adequate nursing homes. However, the entitlement of migrant care workers is extremely restricted as they are excluded from the protection of Labor Standard Law and there is a need for social policy that guarantees the human right of migrant workers. The comparison between Japan and Taiwan, Province of China provides an excellent example between the role of the state and the market in mediating the migration of care workers and their incorporation into the social welfare regime.

Aside from the migrant care workers, the issues of foreign brides which wittingly or unwittingly undertake care are discussed. The economic disparity between East and Southeast Asia created flows of foreign brides to marry husbands with wider age gaps in Taiwan, Province of China, Korea and Japan where the line between migrant care worker and marriage migrant become blurred.

In Taiwan, Province of China, the foreign brides from mainland China and Southeast Asia are increasing within the past decades. In order to provide support to foreign brides, County Family Services Center for Foreign Spouses was established

33 centers operating all over Taiwan, Province of China. Through action research, the role of social work in providing social services to foreign brides has been discussed. The state-run system of social services has an equivocal effect of becoming sites of control by the state to exert its power over the bodies of foreign brides as well as providing space and resources for social workers to support the foreign brides.

In Korea, from the early 1990s marriage migrants from China and Southeast Asian countries came to marry to men living in rural areas where single men were left alone without wives. Here marriage is supposed to solve reproductive labor for families in need. Korean government does not permit foreign women to migrate to work in reproductive sector except Koreans from abroad and marriage migrant women. In terms of policies for migrants, marriage migrants are the only people for Korean government to consider as their subject for policies while migrant workers are supposed to leave Korea after their work contract. Since 2001 the government began to consider marriage migrant women seriously under the idea that they are reproducing Koreans and providing cares for Koreans and brought them as target group for supporting policies. As of 2009, 100 multicultural family centers are established to help marriage migrant women to understand and assimilate Korean society better in terms of educating Korean language, child care and way of life in rural area; living in all over Korea.

The overall research examines and compares the nature of flow of Southeast Asian women to East Asia and discusses the prospects of incorporation of Southeast Asian women into our 'imagined community.'