

Asian Breeze

KITAKYUSHU FORUM ON ASIAN WOMEN MARCH 2007

Triannual Publication



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NO. **49**
MARCH 2007

6th East Asian Women's Forum

The 6th East Asian Women's Forum, organized by the All-China Women's Federation was held in Beijing on July 18 and 19, 2006 and brought together a total of approximately 300 participants from Japan, South Korea, Mongolia, the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan and North Korea. During the Forum, lively discussions were held on the main theme: Gender Equity and Sustainable Development – Opportunities, Challenges and Actions of Women in East Asia in Globalization. There were a total of six sub-sessions, at which discussions were held on the following three sub-themes: Women's Equal Participation in Decision-making and Management, Women's Equal Participation in Economic Development, and Creation of an Equal Social Environment for Women's Development. At the closing ceremony, through great applause, participants adopted the Declaration of the 6th East Asian Women's Forum.

Since the first East Asian Women's Forum held in Japan in 1994, the forums have provided East Asian Women with excellent opportunities to exchange views and share experiences.

At the opening ceremony, Ms. Gu Xiulian, Vice Chairperson of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress and President of the All-China Women's Foundation, stated that East Asian women are striving to achieve women's empowerment, realize gender equity and pioneer a better future society for all people by combining efforts to overcome various challenges in this age of advanced globalization, while also taking advantage of the ample opportunities also made available by globalization. Ms. Gu expressed her sincere hope that the 6th Forum would provide new and ideal opportunities to exchange views, share knowledge and experiences, strengthen cooperation and partnerships, and develop various projects to empower East Asian women.

Of the 300 participants in the 6th Forum, 120 were from overseas and 180 were from China. To our surprise, the number of Chinese participants was higher than expected. Among the overseas participants were three representatives from North Korea, including the Vice Chairperson of the Korean Democratic Women's Union. Since they were the first from North Korea to take part in the Forum series, we were pleased that the 6th Forum became the first Forum to enjoy participation by representatives from all East Asian countries and regions. Moreover, the 6th Forum brought together representatives from national governments, academia, and grassroots groups.



Ms. Zhao Shaohua
Vice President and Member
of the Secretariat of the
All-China Women's Federation

During the opening ceremony, Ms. Huang Qingyi, Executive Vice Chairperson of the National Working Committee on Children and Women under the State Council, delivered a speech, which was followed by a talk by the representative of the participants, Ms. Yasuko Wachi, Professor at Josai International University Institute for Gender & Women's Studies, from Japan. Next, I gave a presentation regarding the present situation of Chinese women, focusing on women's participation in political activities, women's economic activities, education, healthcare and respect for human rights. During the plenary session, representatives from various countries and regions gave presentations on various topics, including women's employment, housework, women's studies and so forth. During the sub-sessions, participants held lively and straightforward discussions on various topics, including opportunities for and challenges involved in women's participation in political activities and economic development, as well as social welfare for women, in addition to other thought-provoking issues.

During the closing ceremony, the All-China Women's Federation presented a gift to the organizer of the 7th Forum. Professor Wachi received the gift on behalf of the next organizer, an embroidered ball called a *xiuqiu*, which is a special product of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. We presented this ball as a symbol of friendship and solidarity among East Asian women.

At the reception held after the end of the Forum, participants performed folk songs and dances of their respective countries/regions. Viewing their performances, I was convinced that despite differences in nationality and types of challenges confronting women, we can help each other by maintaining and deepening our friendships, and we can overcome challenges together, however great they may appear to be. I expect that the 7th East Asian Women's Forum in Japan in 2009 will be an even greater event.

Profile

Born in 1952. Studied at the Chinese Department of Beijing Normal University from 1974 to 1977. After graduation, served as Deputy Secretary of Tianjin Youth League from 1986 to 1991. Served in the Information Office of the State Council as Deputy Director, Director, and Secretary-General from 1991 to 2001. Transferred to All-China Women's Federation in 2001. Appointed Vice President and member of the Secretariat in 2003.

Population and Gender (1)

Gender Equality and Falling Birth Rates



Mr. Makoto Atoh
Professor, Faculty of Human Sciences, Waseda University

Profile

Mr. Atoh is in his present post after working as Director-General of the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research. He has also held positions as Chair of the UN Commission on Population and Development, President of the Population Association of Japan and member of the Council on Population Problems.

Since the 1990s, there has been a positive correlation between women's labor participation rates and total fertility rates in advanced capitalist countries, including Japan. In other words, birth rates have generally been higher where more women participate in the workforce than in countries where fewer women participate. For instance, birth rates are higher in Sweden and other Scandinavian countries, French-speaking European countries, the U.S. and other English-speaking countries, which all enjoy high labor participation rates by women, as compared to other countries, such as Italy, Spain, other southern European countries and Japan, where women's labor participation rates are lower.

It is generally believed that the more women engage in public activities, the fewer children are born. It is commonly recognized that women who receive higher education and continue working tend to marry and give birth later in life, or even not to marry or have children at all. Since it is difficult for most women to simultaneously fulfill both occupational and family responsibilities, many women are urged to choose between a career or family. In this case, an economist may say that the "opportunity cost" (the cost of an economic activity foregone by the choice of another activity) for a woman who has chosen to have and raise children is equivalent to the potential income she would have earned if she had continued working. This cost increases if a woman is highly educated, has more employment opportunities, and her income level is closer to that of a man. In actuality, however, many countries with higher women's labor participation rates maintain higher birth rates than those with lower rates. Why is this?

In countries where both women's labor participation and birth rates are relatively high (hereinafter referred to as "moderately-low fertility countries," that is, countries with a total fertility rate of at least 1.6), women's labor participation rates began increasing during the 1960s, while birth rates declined. In the mid-80s, however, birth rates ceased falling and even grew, despite continued growth in women's labor participation rates. In contrast, in countries where both women's labor participation and birth rates are low, labor rates gradually began growing during the 1970s, while birth rates began to drop during the same period. In these countries, birth rates continue to drop rapidly, even though women's labor participation rates do not sharply increase.

These countries are now categorized as "lowest-low fertility countries" (countries with a total fertility rate of 1.3 or lower).

But why are birth rates relatively high in some countries, despite high women's labor participation rates, and low in others even though labor rates are not increasing?

Based on historical studies of moderately-low fertility countries, we can reasonably suppose that birth rates change in two stages. In the first stage, birth rates drop as a result of an increase in the number of women participating in public activities on an equal basis with men. In the second stage, however, birth rates are no longer affected by these factors. There can be various factors that halt the decline in birth rates: in Scandinavian countries, for instance, we can attribute this halt to governmental policies promoting gender equality, and the creation of a society where both men and women share occupational and family responsibilities. In the U.S., the upturn in birth rates may be attributable to efforts on the part of the private sector, including the establishment of private child-care facilities, parental support programs, and the creation of flexible labor market systems.

A review of the two stages experienced by moderately-low fertility countries indicates that lowest-low fertility countries long remain in the first stage. Thus far, various efforts to increase birth rates have failed and these countries are unable to enter the next stage. In these countries, despite relatively low women's labor participation rates, birth rates have dropped sharply to unprecedented levels. Factors inhibiting progress into the second stage could include deeply embedded stereotypes regarding gender-based roles, social orientation toward male-dominant systems, enlarged family systems that place high priority on parent-child relationships, a traditional view of the family and strong gender-based prejudice. Moreover, such traditional values result in discriminatory systems in private enterprises, minor roles played by men in housework and child care, and insufficient governmental support policies.

Studies of moderately-low fertility countries indicate that although promoting gender equality can temporarily decrease birth rates, it eventually shifts upward. Accordingly, we should continue working to achieve gender equality because only through this path can we recover the present critical birth rate level.

The 17th Kitakyushu Conference on Asian Women

Creating a Just and Plentiful Future—What is the Education for Sustainable Development?

The 17th Kitakyushu Conference on Asian Women was held on November 18 and 19, 2006 on the theme: Creating a Just and Plentiful Future – What is the Education for Sustainable Development? A total of four overseas panelists were invited to the Conference from South Korea, Malaysia, Singapore and Denmark, along with nine from Japan. With reference to studies conducted in Japan and abroad on the definition of “sustainable development” and the types of education necessary for promoting sustainable development, the panelists and the audience discussed what can be done to create a better society for future generations. The 4th Kitakyushu Environmental Award Ceremony was held concurrently with the Conference.

Schedule

Nov. 18 (Sat.)

13:00 - 14:00

The 4th Kitakyushu Environmental Award Ceremony

14:00 - 17:00

The 17th Kitakyushu Conference on Asian Women Symposium

Creating a Just and Plentiful Future—What is the Education for Sustainable Development?

Nov. 19 (Sun.)

10:00 - 12:30

Presentation of Research Activity Reports

13:30 - 16:00

International Symposium

Emerging Policies for Migrant Care Workers for the Elderly in Japan

—What Can We Learn from EU and East Asia?—

The 4th Kitakyushu Environmental Award Ceremony

Environmental Award

Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland
(Former Chair of the World Commission on Environment and Development, Former Prime Minister of Norway)

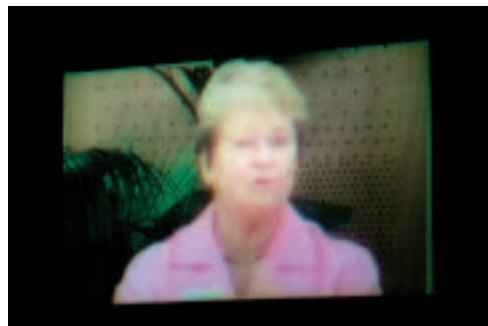
Special Merit Award

Dr. Masataka Hanashima
(Head of the Fukuoka Research Center for Recycling Systems, Professor Emeritus of Fukuoka University)

Encouragement Awards

- Takamiya Mariver Foundation for Environmental Protection
- Kankyo Miraijyuku Non-Profit Organization
- The Totoro Fund

Video message from Dr. Brundtland



Kitakyushu City established the Kitakyushu Environmental Award as part of its commitment to develop Kitakyushu into a World Capital of Sustainable Development. In addition to commending Japanese and overseas organizations and individuals that have made exceptional contributions to environmental protection, Kitakyushu City intends to build an extensive network committed to a broad spectrum of environmental protection activities through this award program.

This year, the fourth Environmental Award was presented to Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland, who in 1987 set forth the concept of “sustainable development,” a strategic concept for global environmental conservation. The Special Merit Award was presented to Dr. Masataka Hanashima, a leading player in establishing the Kitakyushu Eco-Town Project. Dr. Hanashima is currently committed to human resource development as director of the Kyushu Environmental Technology Creation Center. Encouragement Awards were presented to the Takamiya Mariver Foundation for Environmental Protection, the Kankyo Miraijyuku Non-Profit Organization and The Totoro Fund.



The 17th Kitakyushu Conference on Asian Women



Ms. Hiroko Hara

The 17th Kitakyushu Conference on Asian Women was co-organized by the Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women (KFAW) and the Kitakyushu Education for Sustainable Development Council, following the 4th Kitakyushu Environmental Award Ceremony.

The Conference began with greetings by Ms. Hiroko Hara, Chair of the KFAW. Ms. Hara stated that although the Conference theme, Creating a Just and Plentiful Future, seemed to be a lofty and challenging goal, we should believe in our own power to realize that goal. She told the audience that the enthusiasm of women's grassroots groups in Kitakyushu had led the City to overcome environmental pollution, a mission that was once considered impossible. Ms. Hara also expressed her hope that the participants would give serious consideration to the essential elements to achieve the goal of the Conference.

Following the greetings by Ms. Hara, Ms. Katae Terasaka, representative of the Kitakyushu Education for Sustainable Development Council, delivered a speech, in which she stated that education for sustainable development, the theme of the Conference, refers not just to school education, but to all types of educational programs. She emphasized the importance of concerted efforts on the part of citizens to hand down a better environment to future generations. She also encouraged the audience to review their daily lives from the perspective of environmental protection, and to initiate whatever measures they can toward environmental preservation.



Ms. Katae Terasaka

○Symposium

Creating a Just and Plentiful Future—What is the Education for Sustainable Development?

Coordinator:

Ms. Yoshiko Misumi, President of Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women

Panelists:

- Mr. Ryokichi Hirono, Director of KITA Environmental Cooperation Center, Professor Emeritus of Seikei University
- Mr. Katsunori Suzuki, Senior Researcher of UNU-IAS
- Mr. Osamu Abe, Professor of Rikkyo University, Representative of ESD-J
- Ms. Park Eun-kyong, Director of Environment and Culture Institute, South Korea
- Ms. Salfarina Abdul Gapor, Lecturer of Universiti Sains Malaysia

Since the themes of previous conferences focused on specific problems relating to women's social status in Japan and Asia, panelists first gave presentations on the theme from their respective viewpoints in order to provide an overall understanding.



Mr. Ryokichi Hirono

Mr. Ryokichi Hirono explained the concept of sustainable development and its background, as well as activities currently under way in Japan to promote education for sustainable development.

Mr. Hirono stressed the vital importance of promoting sustainable development, and urged us to think about various domestic challenges, such as rapid environmental degradation, depletion of natural resources, and growing income gaps, poverty and social instability. Moreover, we must also study sustainable development in the context of diverse global challenges, including global warming, desertification, marine pollution, ozone layer depletion, radically diminishing bio-diversity, terrorism and regional conflicts.

Next, Mr. Hirono introduced Japan's action plan, prepared in March 2006 as part of programs under the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (hereinafter referred to as the "DESD"). The action plan includes chapters on the participation of various groups/individuals seeking to build a sustainable society, the importance of facilitating integrated social development by simultaneously addressing environmental and non-environmental challenges, and the need for international understanding and cooperation.

Mr. Hirono also introduced guidelines to promote ESD, including community development, place and content of education, participatory learning approaches, teaching methods, systematic thinking processes and practices, partnerships among individual organizations and performance evaluation. He stated that individual organizations responsible for ESD should explore their own methods of implementing ESD and promote public awareness.

Mr. Katsunori Suzuki, reported on United Nations ESD activities. To start, he explained about the DESD for the period 2005 - 2014 during which various programs are being carried out under the leadership of UNESCO. According to Mr. Suzuki,



Mr. Katsunori Suzuki

the national governments of individual countries must compile their own action plans, on the basis of the International Implementation Scheme on the DESD. Mr. Suzuki explained that the International Implementation Scheme sets forth a vision for the DESD which states that social systems should be established to provide people all over the world with access to high-quality education and opportunities to learn about values essential to creating sus-

tainable societies. ESD should be the type of education that helps develop human resources by reorienting people toward creating sustainable societies, and building their capacity.

To promote the DESD, he said that the United Nations has already launched Sustainable Development Programs, major elements of which include promoting public awareness of ESD, establishing regional centers in various parts of the world, reinforcing ESD activities by advanced educational institutes, developing online education and training teachers.

Moreover, the United Nations suggests that Regional Centers of Expertise (hereinafter referred to as "RCE") be established. RCE will serve as platforms for exchanging views and sharing experiences relating to various ESD activities. As of November 2006, there were RCEs in 12 regions in the world.



Mr. Osamu Abe

Mr. Osamu Abe gave a presentation on initiatives taken by various NGOs/NPOs. He first explained the historical relations between the DESD and NGOs, stating that the DESD is a brainchild of Japanese NGOs. According to Mr. Abe, in 2001, a year before the World Summit

for Sustainable Development (WSSD), held in Johannesburg in September 2002, various NGOs and NPOs in Japan formed the Japan Forum for Johannesburg (JFJ) with an aim to contribute to the Summit. The JFJ submitted the idea of the DESD to the Japanese government, which proposed this idea at WSSD jointly with JFJ. Shortly after the Summit, the 57th session of the UN General Assembly unanimously adopted the proposal of the Japanese government and declared the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, which commenced on January 2005. Although the JFJ was subsequently disbanded, NGO members in turn established the Japanese Council on the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD-J), with an aim to promote DESD activities.

During the first half of the '90s, although there were many NGOs committed to ESD activities, these NGOs seldom entered into partnership. After the concept of sustainable development became widespread among the NGOs, however, they began forming partnerships and networks. With the DESD under way, membership in the ESD-J now stands at more than 100.

The objectives of the ESD-J include networking individuals and organizations in Japan that promote public awareness of social problems. Other missions of ESD-J include proposing policies to the national government and implementing policies with the government as its partner, building an appropriate system to enable more NGOs to participate in programs for building sustainable societies, reporting and publicizing activities of Japanese NGOs and the national government to international organizations, and building schemes to develop human resources capable of promoting DESD campaigns globally.

Following the Japanese panelists, speakers from Tongyong, South Korea and Penang, Malaysia introduced activities in their respective regions, both of which have been acknowledged as RCEs by UNU and UNESCO.



Ms. Park Eun-kyong

Ms. Park Eun-kyong reported on the activities of Tongyong City, which was designated an RCE in October 2005. In Tongyong, Ms. Park said, the City authority plays a leading role in ESD programs. The USD 20 million project of the RCE is primarily funded by the City, with financial

support from the South Korean national government. Although Tongyong is a small city with a population of only 130,000, 80% of the population is currently involved in RCE programs. Ms. Park said that the ultimate goal of Tongyong's commitment to ESD activities is to create an economically, ecologically and socially sustainable society. For instance, the City has designated two model schools, where ESD programs are under way. In the near future, the City intends to include all its elementary and high schools within the RCE framework. While providing teachers with ESD training, the City also offers regular educational programs to staff members of the City government to reorient their efforts toward sustainable development. As future tasks, Ms. Park mentioned that the City should build partnerships and networks with other RCEs elsewhere in the world, in addition to expanding the RCE from Tongyong to all of South Korea, and eventually to the Asia-Pacific region and on a global basis.



Ms. Salfarina Abdul Gapor

Following the report on South Korea, Ms. Salfarina Abdul Gapor reported on the RCE in Penang, which was designated an RCE in June 2005. The Universiti Sains Malaysia is the major functionary. Following RCE certification,

Ms. Abdul Gapor said that local people's ideas have changed. Before certification they had been largely concerned with what sustainable development was, but now they are more concerned with how to realize it. As a result, the focus of RCE programs has changed from "education about sustainable development" to "education toward sustainable development."

Under Penang RCE programs, efforts are under way to ensure all people access to education, and to introduce online education. Ms. Abdul Gapor emphasized that education should place priority on encouraging students to review their own ways of life, learn altruism so as to benefit others, and develop a proactive attitude toward life. Penang's RCE programs comprise short, medium and long-term activities. Short-term activities include campaigns to promote public awareness, and training to prepare educational programs; medium-term activities are comprised of modifications of educational programs and program evaluation activities.

Long-term activities include development of useful tools for self-evaluation, together with the creation of an information center to build a database and initiate data provision services.

In conclusion, Ms. Abdul Gapor stated that in addition to ESD, there is another important issue that we must discuss: women and development. She stressed the importance of implementing development programs based on full recognition of the great diversity among people.

Panelists' presentations were followed by a Q&A session. Regarding the differences between ESD activities and conventional environmental protection activities, one audience member suggested that conventional NGO activities lacked exchange with other organizations, and that without exchange between various groups, it was difficult for NGO members to develop a broader perspectives. Another stated that each NGO should recognize its own position and role in the greater movement for promoting sustainable development. Still another mentioned that in order to promote community development through concerted efforts, different NGOs should stand on an equal footing, however difficult it may be.

The Symposium was effective in imparting knowledge about sustainable development and related educational issues to audience members, who previously had only a vague image about these issues. It is our sincere hope that this Symposium has stimulated audience members' interest in ESD, inspiring them to participate in activities to develop a sustainable society in Kitakyushu that we can proudly hand down to our future generations.

○Presentation of Research Activity Reports

Since 2005, KFAW has promoted research programs by guest researchers. In 2006, the final year of the research program, researchers gave presentations on the results of their research, so as to share with audiences their study outcomes and exchange ideas.

Development of Rights-Based Approach and Women's Empowerment in Asia

Ms. Hiroko Hashimoto, Professor of Jumonji University

Ms. Atsuko Miwa, Researcher of Kyoto Human Rights Research Institute



Female Workers in Japanese Enterprises in Dalian City, China: Their Working Conditions and Cooperative Education

Ms. Toshiko Hirata, Professor of Kyushu Women's Junior College

The Problems of Japanese Society from the Viewpoints of East Asian Female Victims Trafficked to Japan

Mr. Akihiko Morita, Professor of Tokyo Institute of Technology

(See Research Report in Asian Breeze Vol. 48 for details)

○International Symposium:

Emerging Policies for Migrant Care Workers for the Elderly in Japan

—What Can We Learn from EU and East Asia?—



In Japan, because of the rapidly aging population, a serious labor shortage is predicted in the near future, particularly among nurses and care workers for the elderly.

The organizers invited panelists from Denmark and Singapore to this symposium, both of which host migrant workers from abroad. Together with Japanese specialists engaged in elderly care, the overseas panelists held discussions on the ideal approach to establish good relations between non-Japanese care workers and elderly Japanese patients, their families and the managers of facilities for the elderly.

Symposium participants pointed out various challenges that must be overcome by non-Japanese care workers in order to work in Japan. Of those, the major challenges are posed by communication problems arising from language and cultural barriers. At the same time, it was pointed out that the host country must prepare appropriate legal systems, training systems and systems for maintaining appropriate wage levels and other working conditions for non-Japanese workers.

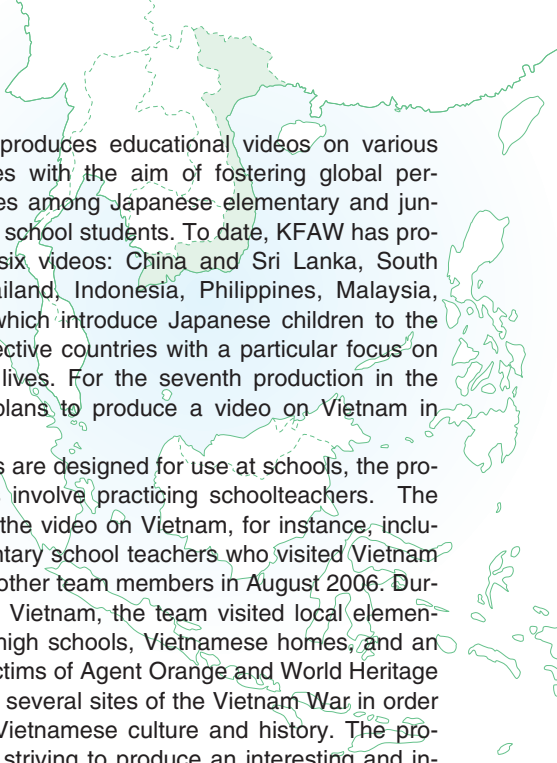
To overcome the various challenges involved in hosting care workers from abroad, it is essential to combine the efforts of the host country governments, facility managers, Japanese and non-Japanese care workers, care service recipients and their families. Symposium participants concluded that Japanese people should not simply expect overseas care workers to learn and understand Japanese culture and customs. Equally important are the efforts put forth by Japanese people to respect care workers' human rights, and to understand their cultural and social backgrounds.

Report from Vietnam

KFAW produces educational videos on various countries with the aim of fostering global perspectives among Japanese elementary and junior high school students. To date, KFAW has produced six videos: China and Sri Lanka, South

Korea and Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines, Malaysia, and Australia, which introduce Japanese children to the profiles of respective countries with a particular focus on children's daily lives. For the seventh production in the series, KFAW plans to produce a video on Vietnam in July 2007.

Since the videos are designed for use at schools, the production projects involve practicing schoolteachers. The project team of the video on Vietnam, for instance, included four elementary school teachers who visited Vietnam for a week with other team members in August 2006. During their stay in Vietnam, the team visited local elementary and junior high schools, Vietnamese homes, and an NGO helping victims of Agent Orange and World Heritage sites, as well as several sites of the Vietnam War in order to learn about Vietnamese culture and history. The production team is striving to produce an interesting and inspiring video so that Japanese children will be able to share the excitement with project team members.



▲First grade class in Cu Chi

In Hanoi, the project team members visited the family of Ms. Tram Anh, a fourth-year student of Chu Van An Junior High School, who is currently studying Japanese. She explained the daily routines of typical Vietnamese junior high school students to the team members and her parents also discussed their views on education.



▲With Ms. Tram Anh's family and Japanese teachers

In southern Vietnam, the project team members visited an elementary school founded by a Japanese NPO, Niigata International Volunteer Center, in a joint effort with the Women's Charity Association Ho Chi Minh. This school is located in the Cu Chi District in the suburbs of Ho Chi Minh. Although the project team visited the school during the summer vacation, they were given opportunities to observe three classes at the school, and ask teachers about the Vietnamese educational system.



▲With elementary school teachers in Cu Chi

Ms. Teruko Hiroishi (Ibori Elementary)

Although I was surprised to see more cars and motorcycles than I had expected, I found that in Vietnam time passed slowly and I was able to relax to my heart's content. I enjoyed visiting the cities and towns with their unique natural environments, lifestyles, cultures and histories. Despite differences in cultural and social backgrounds between Japan and Vietnam, I confirmed that we all have the same human nature. Meeting Vietnamese people who never give up their dreams, I learned the importance of embracing one's own dream.



Ms. Masako Fujii (Koishi Elementary)

"Please promise that you will never engage in war, any war. We hate Agent Orange; we hate nuclear weaponry. We want peace." This is a passage from the picture book, *Letters from Viet and Duc* (conjoined twins born in the eighties). During my visit to Vietnam, I was deeply impressed by the Vietnamese people's earnest quest for peace, together with their untiring efforts to enjoy their lives. I really hope that the video fully imparts to Japanese children the Vietnamese people's strong desire for peace and their amazing enthusiasm for leading a happy life.



Mr. Yukihiro Sugimoto (Dairi-Minami Elementary)

I was surprised to see that Hanoi was so busy and lively. The great number of motorcycles particularly overwhelmed me. I was indeed astonished to see three women riding on the same motorcycle, traveling at amazingly high speeds. Although this might cause traffic accidents in Japan, in Vietnam, riders and pedestrians maintain eye contact with each other to avoid accidents. What a wonderful country!



Ms. Ayako Oishi (Tenraiji Elementary)

During my visit to Vietnam, I learned the vital importance of building a peaceful world. I learned that many Vietnamese people are still suffering from the lingering effects of the Vietnam War. If a war torments people so much, and for so long, what is the good of it? I was also deeply impressed by the close family ties of Vietnamese people. I believe that peace-building activities should begin with compassion for the people closest to you, such as family members.



PERUVIAN CHILDREN: OUR BEST PRIORITY

Ms. Carmen Ledesma, foreign correspondent in Peru, sent KFAW a report about Peruvian children. How about Peru?



The Peruvian Constitution of 1993 states that: "The community and the State protect particularly the child, the adolescent..." We also

have broad legal frameworks, as well as a Code for Children and Adolescents, which has been modified several times, intending to improve the situation.

Peru is a young country with a large poor population, mostly formed of children and adolescents. Inhabitants under the age of 18 comprise 40% of the total population (10,617,000 in 2001).

Poverty has persisted for many decades. Several studies about poverty have concluded that its effects on children and adolescents are many times irreversible. At the socio-economic level, poverty severely restricts the equality of present and future opportunities. Its impact is shown in mortality rates, morbidity, malnutrition, child work, and school performance.

54.8% of the population live in poor conditions, while 24.4% live in extreme poverty. Furthermore, 40.4% of poor family members are under the age of 15. This means that, children and adolescents constitute the most excluded group in Peruvian society and therefore, are vulnerable and at higher risk.

To modify indicators concerning childhood and adolescence in Peru, it is certain that sustained and coordinated work is necessary, as well as consistent and sufficient investment. In this regard, it was imperative to develop a National Action Plan as a strategic tool of the State.

In 2002, Peru designed The National Action Plan for Children and Adolescents 2002-2010 as a result of the coordinated efforts of the government and civil society. The supporting arguments of the Plan respond to the basic needs of Peruvian children and adolescents, and respect their culture, gender, and characteristics.

A diagnosis of the situation, which is the basis of the elaboration of the Plan, includes alarming indicators on poverty, malnutrition, labor exploitation, family and social violence, low educational levels of rural girls, adolescent pregnancy, and others. These are the problems we must consider in order to achieve the full recognition of the human rights

of Peruvian children and adolescents, and thus, guarantee their personal and social development.



THE FORUM WINDOW

Co-existence with Migrant Workers

Today, more and more people are working overseas and this trend will accelerate with the conclusion of various trade agreements. For example, in September 2006, the Japan-Philippine Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) was signed, which enables Filipino nurses and care givers to work in Japan. The EPA with the Indonesian government, which was agreed upon in November 2006, also includes a clause about the migration of nurses and care givers.

Last August, I had a chance to visit a private nursing college in the Philippines, which had cutting-edge medical equipment, advanced facilities, and lectures provided in English. These special facilities and education are a response to the students who plan to work overseas after graduating from college. Nurses who are already practicing at hospitals also expressed a strong desire to work overseas. For example, one young male nurse, who was working at a government-run hospital in Manila, said to me with a happy smile, "In half a year, I will become eligible to apply to work overseas. If I get a job in the U.S., I can earn ten times what I earn now." He needed to wait six months because anyone who was educated at a governmental nursing college was obligated to work at least three years for a governmental hospital in the Philippines.

In this age of globalization, it is natural that people seek work overseas for higher incomes and better working conditions. However, in spite of the increase in the move of people at the global level, there remain many problems, especially regarding migrant workers. Will their human rights be respected in the host countries? Will they be given sufficient wages? Could the presence of low-wage migrant workers have a negative impact on their counterparts in their host countries? In their home countries, on the other hand, migration can cause various problems, including "brain drains," labor shortages and dissolution of families. In fact, it is reported that several countries in Africa are suffering from a serious shortage of nurses, while the British government promotes policies to employ nurses from overseas. In Japan, some small and medium-sized companies have allegedly been employing overseas "trainees" as a source of cheap labor.

To prevent such ethical problems and to ensure that both migrant workers and people in the host countries enjoy working/accepting migrants, more studies and surveys on migrant workers from a human rights perspective are needed, as well as advocacy activities based on these studies.

Ms. Yukiko Oda

Professor, The Japanese Red Cross Kyushu International College of Nursing / Chief Researcher, KFAW

The Trafficking in Vietnamese Women

Ms. Le Thi (Vietnam)

The trafficking in Vietnamese women, added to that in China, Taiwan, Korea, Cambodia and other countries, is creating indignation in the population. Many young women, including 12 and 13 years-old girls, have been duped into following traders who brought them to a foreign country and sold them to brothels.

There is not yet any statistical data for the whole country, however, Vietnamese newspapers have published data about the victims in many provinces. For instance, 20,000 women from Lang Son and Quang Ninh provinces have been trafficked across the border to China. In addition, 10,000 women and children from Ho Chi Minh city, have been sold to China and Cambodia. In the provinces of Tay Ninh, An Giang, and Dong Thap, many women have been forced into prostitution. In Can Tho province, all districts reported cases of local women "married" to foreign men, coming for the most part from Taiwan and Korea. In fact, in rural areas, young women with little experience are easy prey for traders who persuade them to go to foreign countries. The rationale is that they will have jobs with high salaries and good working conditions. Once abroad, these women are soon sold to brothels or to men wanting to buy sex.

Most women who have been sold want to return home but they are powerless and have no means to liberate themselves. Specifically, their passports and all other papers have been confiscated. They become slaves, leading illegal lives in the new country and their names are not registered.

Another form of trafficking in women is the organization of "marriages" of Vietnamese women with foreign men. In many of such "marriages," the bridegroom immediately sells the bride to a brothel or to an old man who is sick, physically or mentally challenged, and unable to find a wife among the local women.

The Vietnamese community is striving to prevent trafficking in women and children.

1. State bodies hunt and severely punish "traders."
2. Organizations develop education programs for women, helping them avoid being deceived.
3. Activities for eradicating hunger and reducing poverty are being increased in order to help poor families avoid being forced to sell their daughters.
4. Due aid is given to victims who have returned home, allowing them to find jobs.

Resiliency of Filipino Women During and After Disaster

Ms. Rita Gatchalian (Philippines)

Natural disasters or calamities affect people, especially women because they are more concerned with the daily needs of the family. Pressures and worries are additional burdens for women when a calamity occurs. These additional pressures can cause women to end up even more socially marginalized if not given immediate support from local government units.

According to the latest report of the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ), people are now rebuilding their lives after the massive flooding and landslides which devastated the Quezon province one year ago. However, many who have permanently lost their jobs before the disaster have yet to find a new source of livelihood.

The center also discovered that Filipino women are taking the lead in repairing shattered lives and devastated communities. They appear to have recovered faster from the psychological impact of the disaster and are more aggressive in pursuing livelihood opportunities.

Since the disaster, many women in Quezon want skills training to open the way towards more opportunities to earn. Their resourcefulness and patience were clearly seen in the different activities in which they participated.

More often, it is the women who take care of their families and communities. It was noted in these areas that while men were still recuperating from the psychological impact of the disaster, women were already busy looking for jobs and working in relief and rehabilitation programs in the communities. In addition, some women who have found work outside the home said they finally learned to delegate some of their domestic responsibilities to their husbands and children.

The traditional set-up of having women as the main person responsible for household chores is already obsolete. The new set-up enables them to buy things from their own earnings. The women in Quezon specifically were ready to explore other type of work, including digging creeks, clearing roads and hauling stones.

An officer from the Philippine National Red Cross said that when they had organized/initiated disaster management training in some barangays in Quezon, the most enthusiastic and willing volunteers were women.

Truly, Filipino women are one of our greatest assets during and after disaster. With women emerging more dominant than men in the rehabilitation efforts of disaster struck areas, they are also more willing to take on new challenges. These women have made a difference in the lives of the people in the community.

(Re)Presenting Women in Disaster: The Women of Post-Tsunami Aceh

Mr. Fairoz Ahmad (Singapore)

A 'disaster' is only a meaning attributed by the arrival of outsiders to the scene of the catastrophe. This is because when everyone is afflicted/affected by an unimaginable calamity, there is no basis for comparison — the 'us' versus the 'them,' since everyone suffers equally. Thus, disaster is largely reported by those who were not victims and analyzed at length by experts from outside the community. Decisions are made *for*, not *by* the victims. It is through these processes that a mental image of the disaster is created and meanings attributed, sometimes accurate, other times erroneous. This issue of representation is equally problematic when applied to how women should act/react in disaster.

Women become objectified in disaster and are thus represented as helpless, vulnerable, emotionally traumatized and dependent on outside aid. The exclusivity of such portrayals misrepresents the truth, for in disaster, women can actually be instrumental in restoring some semblance of normalcy.

In fact, post-tsunami Aceh opens up opportunities for women to gain an unprecedented level of independence and leadership denied to them in the patriarchal society pre-tsunami. An aid worker told me in a private conversation that rather than assuming the role of 'damsels in distress,' widows enthusiastically participated in assisted employments, such as opening small provision shops and cash-for-work activities, ranging from cleaning rubbish to cutting high grass.

Furthermore, the destruction of the economy eliminates almost entirely the utility of the skills possessed by men. Immediately after the disaster and many months afterward, there were no opportunities for farmers, fishermen, cab drivers and civil servants to ply their trade. On the other hand, it turned out that the domestic skills possessed by women became a quick and easy way to earn extra cash. Thus, many aid groups furnished them with low cost items like sewing machines, stoves and basic materials like flour and spices in order to commercialize activities like sewing and cooking. These activities, regardless of how menial they are, not only give women a sense of economic independence, but also steer their focus towards the future rather than the past. Unfortunately, such resilience is tampered by societal expectations. Used to having a family (or, according to some locals, having acutely realized the impermanence of life), many sought to (re)marry and (re)build a family. Single women and widows found themselves courted by single men and widowers mere weeks after the tsunami. One may expect that once the traditional nuclear family structure is (re)assembled and the economy (re)structured, original role ex-



▲ Women in Aceh work energetically

pectation resumes. Woman-led households will probably vanish and the resourceful women breadwinners will relinquish their position to return to the domestic realm while leaving work and housing matters to their husbands. While some women do report that they miss work, they rationalize this role reversal as normative, or in their own words, as "how it should be." The weight of tradition has taken care of the disturbed gender expectations. Nevertheless, some women who enjoy their newfound resourcefulness will continue to take part in contributing to their household economy.

Representations of women in disaster help outsiders construct a mental image of the catastrophe and imbued it with meaning. The irony is that in representing the female, the feminine gets *feminized*.

Q&A Corner

Question

Japan's current fertility rate (1.25) represents a new low. It is thought that the tendency to marry later; the high cost of raising a child; the difficulty of juggling career and family are some of reasons. How about your country? What do children mean for your society or family?
Ms. Mayumi Nishimura, Fukuoka, Japan

Answer

Ms. Prabha Thacker, Nepal



In Nepal the total fertility rate has declined over the last three decades from approximately 6.3% to 4.3%. The major reason is that the mean age of marriage has gone up as women become empowered through education and awareness about gender equality. Others are economic and social reasons, for example, the gradual breakdown of the extended family-joint family system, so families are becoming more nuclear. As more women seek work outside the home as professionals or wage earners, they also seek higher standards of living so raising many children becomes difficult. In particular, during the recent armed conflict situation, women became more aware of their own potential as activists, their activities in the public sphere increased, and their role in the private sphere has reduced their reproductive role. Children play a very important role in the family. There are many festivals and religious occasions where children take part with their cousins, whether within family networks or public events. Especially, our auspicious and religious occasions consider young girl children as very special. They are sometimes given special roles in these ceremonies in which children means the family bond itself.

Asian Lifestyles

~Photos from KFAW Readers~

Children in Bangkok

Before going home



I visited Duang Prateep Foundation, which mainly conducts activities in Klong Toey, the largest slum in Bangkok. This foundation promotes many welfare programs, such as management of educational foster parent systems and operation of nursery schools. There are few children in this class because this is for hearing-challenged children. They washed their hands and put baby powder on their face before meals.

A little salesclerk



This is Lama II bazaar which is located in suburbs of Bangkok. In vegetable shops, salesclerks sit at display counters, while meat and fish shops are in face-to-face styles similar to Japan. Thai children often help with household chores, such as care for younger children. Although children keep running around because they are bored, adults ignore them and keep eating. This is because there are elder brothers and sisters watching them. This picture is a scene where a girl helps sell vegetables.

Photographer: Mr. Yoshinori Ohki, Kitakyushu

INFORMATION

COVER PROFILE



Ms. Shigeko Koyakumaru
Kyogen Player

Kyogen are brief plays presented as comic interludes between the somber dramas that make up the traditional program of the *Noh* theatre. The protagonists of *Kyogen* come from medieval Japanese folklore. They include a wide range of types, from servants to priests, which are often drawn in highly exaggerated terms.

Ms. Koyakumaru started to learn how to perform *Kyogen*, even though this is mainly a man's world, as well as other Japanese traditional performing arts including *Kabuki* and *Noh*. Ms. Koyakumaru discovered *Kyogen* when she was a student. She was attracted to the informal stage of *Kyogen* where characters' unique movements, generous-hearted laughter and ordinary people's sense and action are expressed. She enjoys opportunities like cultural festivals to introduce to many people and children the special attraction of *Kyogen*. She hopes we will be more familiar with *Kyogen* and bring its humor into our life.

Ms. Yoshiko Misumi, President of Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women Wins the Cabinet Office Award for Gender Equal Society Merit



Ms. Misumi welcomes attendees

Ms. Yoshiko Misumi was presented an award for her outstanding contribution in the fields of gender equality promotion. She has engaged in promotion of women's administration for more than twenty years throughout the country, as well as Kitakyushu city, including the foundation of KFAW and Kitakyushu

Municipal Gender Equality Center "MOVE." Ms. Misumi expressed her joy in receiving the award: "This prize is not for me personally but for those who have made an effort to promote a gender equal society. It is a passport to have a perspective and awareness of gender equality so that we will be able to live productively in the 21st century."

Location of Kitakyushu



Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women

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KFAW

The Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women (KFAW) was established in October of 1990 with a special government fund for revitalization projects. Subsequently, in 1993, the KFAW was recognized as a foundation by the Ministry of Labor. The purpose of the KFAW, through various projects, is to promote the improvement of women's status as well as their mutual understanding and cooperation in Asia.



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