

Asian Breeze

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Women Today

Women's Conditions all around the World Today



Claude CIARI
Guitarist, Musician



Women's status today in Europe, Asia and the USA seem to be quite different from 50 years ago or more. Many women occupy a leader position or a CEO position in many countries and are very successful business women. This still represents a minority. Much more needs to be done specially in developed nations.

When I was a kid, many men thought that women should take care of the children, the kitchen and the cleaning. Till the beginning of the 20th century, they did not have the right to vote. Look around you now, yes, things did change dramatically. However even though women do the same amount of work in the office, most of the time, they do not receive the same salary or promotion. Moreover, getting married and having children can put a woman's job in jeopardy. Although nowadays pregnant women are getting more support from their companies, much more remains to be done in this area as well.

I was born in France and lived there for 29 years before moving to Tahiti. I met my wife in Japan in 1975 during a concert tour. We married and afterwards I went to a local city hall in Japan, only to discover that my wife's name didn't change. She was supposed to become Madame Ciari but her name was still Yada. I asked what the hell was going on and received a weird answer. A clerk said, "Since you do not have Japanese citizenship, your wife's name cannot be changed." In France, she was Madame Ciari but not here in this strange country called Japan. I was really mad and decided to acquire Japanese citizenship. The process, however, took a while.

In Japan in the past, if a Japanese man married a foreigner, their children were entitled to Japanese

nationality. It was not the case the other way round. This situation took years to change. If the parents are married now, whether the father or mother is Japanese and the other spouse is a foreigner, a child can have two nationalities until the age of 22. When I recall this part of my life, it still makes me a bit angry. Are men and women really equal in Japan? Is gender equality improving in Japan?

I think that women, not only in Asia but all around the world, are a very important asset for peace and stability. They create life and protect their offspring thus becoming the right tool to protect our planet. Men, as warmongers, spent centuries destroying the environment and ignoring people's suffering worldwide.

Most of the time men turn a deaf ear to our wives or other women around us but, after a while, we find out that they are right and concur with them. In fact, during thousands of years, women have been a major factor in politics behind the scene.

I am now 64 years old. Over the years, I continue to be amazed by women's strength and endurance. I do not think that we men could endure the pain of giving birth but women do. Very often men believe we are much cleverer than women but in reality we are wrong.

Although I could continue to discuss endlessly this topic, it is time to conclude this small essay. I am not that good at writing and certainly am not the right person to talk about the status of women in Asia or anywhere else. As a musician, my goal is to make people happy when they listen to my music. As a matter of fact, most of my fans used to be women and I love their company. Even nowadays, about 60% of my audience consists of women.

I trust that before the end of this century women will play a bigger role in global affairs in every area. I wish them well. And I will be a supporter of women's causes forever.

Profile of Claude Ciari

Claude Ciari was born in Nice, France and made his debut as a solo acoustic guitarist in 1964. His hits include "La Playa" and "Le Vert Gallant." After marrying a Japanese woman, he became a Japanese citizen. Although he was a victim of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake (1995), Ciari contributed significantly to restoration of the affected area by holding charity concerts throughout Japan.

Sports and Gender Part 3

Physical Education at Schools and Gender Roles



Keiko ITANI
Professor, Department of Health
and Physical Education,
Kyoto University of Education

For at least ten years, I have been criticizing the personnel systems of Japanese junior and senior high schools in terms of employment of physical education (PE) teachers. Namely, the number of female PE teachers is limited to only one or two for each school. Moreover, their roles are effectively limited to teaching dance and other specific programs. Some senior high schools, including coeducational comprehensive schools, have only male PE teachers. Based on this data, I have criticized the present employment system that favors male applicants over their female counterparts.

A few years ago I asked a certain local Board of Education to disclose its scoring criteria and detailed results of employment examinations for senior high school PE teachers. The Board of Education, however, did not disclose the relevant data. There is a great gap in competition rates for male and female applicants. In 2001, for instance, the competition rate for male applicants was 15.9 times, compared to 106 times for female applicants. In 2003, the competition rate for male applicants was 35.3 times, while that for females was 97 times. Recently, increasing numbers of Boards of Education have begun announcing the results of employment examinations on their websites. However, many such sites do not show gender-based competition rates.

Needless to say, these days both men and women enjoy sports. Differences in the percentages of men and women engaged in sports activities are diminishing for both top athletes and members of the general public who simply enjoy sports in their leisure time. Female students majoring in PE at college or university comprise around 40% of such students. Yet, men remain dominant among PE teachers, sports instructors, judges and officials of sports federations. Concerning the Japanese teams dispatched to the Beijing Olympic Games, of the 30 officials (team leaders, officials, staff members, etc.), only four were women (Japanese Olympic Committee: <http://www.joc.or.jp/english/>). On the Japanese athletics team, for instance, of the 40 athletes, 16 were women and 24 were men. On the other hand, of the 20 officials (including managers, coaches, trainers, etc.) on the same team, only one was a woman. Moreover, all officials of the Japanese *judo* team were men. Although women began participating in athletics and *judo* competitions many years ago, the Japanese sports circle is apparently reluctant to foster female instructors.

It is true that physical aspects are essential to sports and physical education. Accordingly, sports activities and PE sometimes underscore physical differences be-

tween average men and women, even though many differences are also present among individuals of the same sex. As I mentioned in previous articles in this series, modern sports require athletes to gain more muscle and reduce body fat. Since muscles and body fat are controlled by sex hormones, from a gender-sensitive perspective, we could say that muscles and body fat represent the male and female bodies respectively. Combined with differences between men and women in terms of physical constitution and strength, the modern sports culture, which places priority on masculine muscles rather than on feminine body fat, helps foster misconceptions regarding gender-based roles. This tendency is even augmented by the masculine and feminine images created by mass media.

The key role of PE teachers is to provide professional instructions regarding physical development and life-long practices of exercises. To serve as a PE teacher, therefore, one needs neither experience as a top athlete nor extraordinary physical strength. Presently, we see both men and women engaged in diverse occupations, including those that were previously regarded exclusively as one sex over the other.

As a symbol of gender-based roles in school sports activities, I would like to discuss the presence of women managers for extracurricular sports activities. Although in theory managers of sports teams should have important roles, at actual Japanese senior high schools, women managers are expected to accomplish low-profile tasks. In reality, women managers usually end up washing uniforms, cleaning locker rooms and serving drinks to male players. Moreover, many men team members praise women managers who accomplish such unspectacular tasks without complaining. Their roles are similar to those of housewives in that such tasks are invisible and not rewarded. In addition, many male team members regard women managers as a psychological gender symbol that supports men behind the scenes. Men players even expect women managers to play the role of “mother” and “sweetheart.”

Recent studies of PE and sports activities from a gender-sensitive perspective have revealed that differences between men and women in sports activities are not natural or inherent. In fact, we now know that misconceptions about differences between men and women are products of a male-oriented culture. Yet, because of the seemingly natural differences observed in sports activities and PE, regrettably, sports and PE have been used to create and maintain a gender-biased culture.

On the 15th Anniversary of the Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women (KFAW)

Yoshiko MISUMI (KFAW Chair)

This year, KFAW celebrates the 15th anniversary of its official approval by the Japanese government. Since KFAW's founding, it has remained committed to various activities in raising Asian women's social status, building partnerships among women and promoting social development.

● A Special Government Fund for Revitalization Project

In December 1988, the Japanese government decided to provide each municipality nationwide 100 million yen to support each municipality's project toward revitalizing its communities under its own initiative. In response, the City of Kitakyushu solicited from staff members of the City office various project ideas suitable for using the fund. From among the 101 ideas received, the City council selected the idea set forth by the Women's Affairs Office: to establish a permanent organization dedicated to promoting friendly exchanges with other Asian countries, and to conduct survey, research and training programs concerning women's issues.

Using the governmental funding provided to the City, KFAW was inaugurated in October 1990 as a voluntary organization. In October 1993 the Ministry of Labour (now the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare) officially approved KFAW as a foundation under the Ministry's administration.

● Major Activities: Exchange and Research

KFAW's major activities comprise exchange and research programs. To support these programs, we at KFAW also collect and exchange relevant information. In research activities, through partnerships with other Asian universities we collect and disseminate up-to-date information on women's situations in relation to various aspects, including local problems, family issues, environmental protection, regional development and labor issues. Concerning exchange programs, we organize annual international symposiums — Kitakyushu Conferences on Asian Women — on timely subjects. In addition, KFAW organizes Seminars on Gender Mainstreaming Policies for Government Officers and Seminars on Women in Environment and Development, both under contract with the Kyushu International Center of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). To date, KFAW has received a total of over 280 participants in these seminars, which also provide Kitakyushu residents with valuable opportunities to meet with overseas trainees. As part of our efforts in international cooperation and contribution, we also work as secretariat of the UNIFEM Kitakyushu Local Committee, dedicated to the support of women in developing countries. Other initiatives KFAW has so far taken include participation in the exhibition of the Kitakyushu EXPO Festival 2001 and the compiling of a history book: *A Centennial of Women History in Kitakyushu* (Domesu Publishers Inc. 2005).

● Perspectives on Environmental Protection, Regional Development and Gender Equality

Since KFAW's founding, it has been committed to various activities to promote environmental protection and regional development, in line with the global slogan "Equality, Development and Peace," adopted in the International Women's Year (1975). In 1992, the year of the Rio Summit of Environment and Development, KFAW organized an international symposium on the theme of Environmental Protection and Women, with particular focus on women's activities in Kitakyushu.

Together with representatives of residents, KFAW members have participated in various international conferences, including the NGO Forum on Women Beijing '95; 2nd U.S.-Japan Women's Leadership Network on the Environment in 1996; the Women's Conference on Environment in Asia and the Pacific in 2000; the Beijing+5 Global Feminist Symposia in New York in the same year; the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in 2002 and many NGO forums related to these events. During these events, KFAW members organized workshops on the themes of environmental protection and regional development. Through these activities, KFAW has begun to play important roles in world NGO activities relating to environmental protection and gender equality.

● To Realize Sustainable Gender-Equal Societies

In September 2006, the Kitakyushu ESD Council was established, with its secretariat within the KFAW office. ESD (Education for Sustainable Development) refers to education that seeks the optimal balance between different needs from ecological, economic and social perspectives. By promoting ESD, we hope to realize preservation of the natural environment, economic development and social equality. Since diverse educational fields relating to ESD entail gender-sensitive perspectives, KFAW must play essential roles in promoting ESD.

On the 15th anniversary, we KFAW members renewed our resolve to continue our commitments in tandem with global women's and other movements, maintaining partnerships with many other organizations in the world. We will work to reinforce our survey and research activities, and expand our networks in and outside Japan, so as to raise women's social status and promote the realization of gender equality. Through these efforts, we will continue to foster the minds and

awareness of Kitakyushu residents.



◀ At the WSSD in Johannesburg

China's 100-year dream: Living and breathing the Beijing Olympics

Keiko OHAMA (China)

The Beijing Olympics, heralded by China as its "100-year dream," took place in August 2008. Athletes from around the world participated in intense competition. As a resident of Beijing during this time, I was fortunate enough to bask in the spiritual high brought about by this major event. Colorful posters and banners were displayed throughout the city, creating a growing sense of excitement. Everyone fidgeted at work and, once at home, remained glued to the television set until late at night, checking out the games in detail. The next morning, colleagues debated each other furiously around the water cooler.



▲ The monuments express the Olympic motto "Citius, Altius, Fortius" (Faster, Higher, Stronger)

Without question, the main stadium was the place to enjoy the real excitement of the Olympics. I was there in the National Stadium, or the "Bird's Nest," no doubt a familiar sight to Japanese viewers too, and enjoyed the track and field finals to my heart's content. Since I was seated two rows from the front and could almost feel the breathing and butterflies of the competitors, I found myself riveted to every move of the female athletes. It was a truly moving experience to see these female athletes, with their beautiful, lithe bodies so unlike their male counterparts, striving to challenge themselves and the records. In recent years, there has been a growing gender equality movement for Olympic events. The number of female participants rose even more at the Beijing Olympics, expanding the stage for their achievements. Although it is not very well known, the host country China's Olympic achievement record has always been dominated by female athletes. This time around, China won 51 gold medals, which was more than any other country. Out of the 51 gold medals, 24 were won by men and 27 by women. Some sports editorials even commented that it was a good trend that the gap between men and women was smaller than the previous Olympic Games, stating, "We must continue to work for further harmony between men and women." Strong women are a national trait in China, and it shows here, too.

The 16 days of the Olympics went by like a dream.

However, this sports event left behind an immeasurable legacy for the people of Beijing, transforming the face of Beijing in a major way. This change can be said to be the outcome of seven years of effort since it became final the city would host the Olympics. The efforts were made under three concepts advocated by China in its Olympic bid: Green Olympics, High-tech Olympics and People's Olympics.

The "Green Olympics" signifies environmental protection. Beijing is notorious for being a dry and dusty capital city. The rapid economic development exacerbated the problem and air pollution was becoming increasingly serious with each passing year. But as the Olympics drew near, more and more trees were planted in the city, transforming it into a comfortable and pleasing place. Also, due to the restriction on the number of cars in the city during the Games, the blue sky finally came back to Beijing. Now that the residents know that foregoing some degree of convenience in consideration of the environment makes this city a more comfortable place to live, they are debating whether to continue the restriction on the number of cars in the city.

The "High-tech Olympics" brought about an expanded transportation network. Subway and railway lines were opened. More people bought condominiums in the suburbs. And the sphere of human activity is expanding dramatically. On the other hand, the rush hour commute in crowded trains and other aspects of the hurried lifestyle now resemble the same situation in Japan. The human touch of the Siheyuan (traditional Chinese courtyard houses) lifestyle, and the leisurely landscape brought about by the Socialist regime where people enjoyed the closeness of their workplace and residence are being lost. It is rather sad to see them go.

The "People's Olympics" called on 1.7 million volunteers who supported the success of the Olympics in a wide range of fields. When I went on a tour of the Stadium with my mother-in-law, who is Chinese, I was surprised to see her wearing her volunteer uniform. She told me she had registered as a community volunteer on her own initiative. Although she is now retired, she seemed very proud to have been charged with the role of protecting the safety and order of the residential district. Many of the volunteers are women, and some of them will continue to serve after the Olympics are over, in areas such as directing traffic.

Perhaps the most precious legacy left in Beijing after the Olympics is the confidence and radiance of the many local women who, while being inspired by the major international event, nevertheless did a magnificent job in vital, supporting roles behind the scenes.

The 7th JICA Seminar on Gender Mainstreaming

The Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women (KFAW) organizes a series of Seminars on Gender Mainstreaming Policies for Government Officers for Kyushu International Center of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). This seminar series is designed to foster the ability of government officers to create effective and comprehensive policies to mainstream gender-sensitive perspectives in addressing various problems in developing countries.

This seminar was held from June 20 to July 18, 2008, with a particular focus on the realization of gender-equal societies. For this seminar, KFAW received 15 trainees from 15 countries. Although KFAW usually attracts seven to eight participants, the number of participants this year was double the previous average due to a dramatic increase in the number of applicants. KFAW attributes this increase to widespread recognition in developing countries that gender-sensitive per-

1

Madina QASIMI (Afghanistan)
Head of Gender Unit, Ministry of Women Affairs

Of the many challenges we have in Afghanistan, the greatest ones include political uncertainty, poverty, conventional values and practices, and discrimination against women and minorities. Although I found everything I learned during this seminar interesting and useful, I was particularly interested in gender-sensitive budgets, gender-mainstreaming education for individual age groups, and relations between women and environmental conservation. I hope to share the useful information I gained during this seminar with my colleagues at the Ministry.

6

Michele DOUYON (Haiti)
General Coordinator, Unit of Studies and Programation, Ministry of Women Affairs and Women Rights

During this seminar, I learned that to promote gender mainstreaming initiatives and strategies, it is most effective to build a strong network among related parties in both government and private sectors. It is also important to establish an organization that responds and works to satisfy women's basic needs. By building a strong network of people who truly believe in and work for common goals, I believe we can exert greater influence on policymakers.

2

Nenad GALIC (Bosnia-Herzegovina)
Advisor for Legal Issues, Gender Center, Republic of Srpska Government

Although it is not easy to describe in a few words the various elements that inhibit gender mainstreaming, among the major elements is the lack of human and financial resources for promoting gender-mainstreaming policies. During this seminar, I found it particularly rewarding to visit some organizations engaged in gender-mainstreaming initiatives. For instance, we visited a consumer cooperative, where we inspected a childcare support system for women workers. The inspection of the Co-op was very effective, since I found there clues to promoting gender mainstreaming at workplaces in my country with a high ratio of women workers.

3

THE Chhun Hak (Cambodia)

Chief of Office Local Governance, Gender Mainstreaming at Subnational Coordinator, Ministry of Women's Affairs
In promoting gender-mainstreaming policies in Cambodia, the greatest challenges include the lack of cooperation between related government agencies as well as limited financial and human resources. During this seminar in Japan, I realized that Cambodian organizations and agencies concerned need to develop adequate systems and create a favorable workplace environment so as to ensure that each staff member can fully exert his or her abilities. I believe that our staff members are equally dedicated to gender mainstreaming as Japanese citizens. However, we must work to promote the capacity building of staff members and secure proficient human resources.

4

Maria Pilar JIMENEZ ALVAREZ (Chile)
Commercial Assistant, Europe Department, Exports Promotion Bureau-ProChile

I belong to a department that is not directly involved in gender mainstreaming policies. Accordingly, I am afraid that it would not be easy to gain my colleagues' understanding and cooperation for introducing the excellent Japanese systems that I have learned during this seminar. I believe, however, that various initiatives taken by the Gender Equality Center and the concept of work-life balance are effective in addressing various problems in my country. Accordingly, I will make an effort where this would be most effective and feasible.

5

Luse Maivugalei FATUPAITO (Fiji)
Senior Women's Interest Officer, Department of Women, Ministry of Health, Women and Social Welfare

The Co-op that we visited was very impressive, since the organization was working to provide welfare services to local residents, rather than pursuing its own profits. I understand that the Co-op's approach to supply safe and wholesome foods will eventually protect the local environment and traditional agricultural practices. This approach, I believe, can also empower women in Fijian farming villages, many of whom are engaged in small agricultural businesses. The Co-op's system, which seems to be simple, is indeed effective and sustainable in empowering women.

8

Chansoda PHONETHIP (Laos)
Deputy Director, Secretariat of Lao National Commission for the Advancement of Women, Prime Minister's Office

Everything that I have learned at this seminar is effective in promoting gender mainstreaming policies in Laos. What I learned here is particularly useful in studying and selecting gender mainstreaming initiatives to be taken by the Lao National Commission for the Advancement of Women, which is our national machinery in Laos. I believe we must first prepare a series of training and action programs to build staff members' capacity. On-site inspection programs would also be effective for this purpose. We must also consider proper approaches for preparing such programs, and learn techniques to operate these programs in individual government sectors.



7

Sarita
Director, Women Empowerment, Department of Women
In Rajasthan, India, where I am working, one of the things comprises misconceptions held by individual national and state governments are taking various speed of social change is extremely slow. During approach of a childcare center for preschool-age spect toward children's rights. In India, we must children. In addition, I hope to develop special pro-

Policies for Government Officers

spectives are essential in implementing various development programs.

The seminar programs, primarily provided at Kyushu International Center of JICA, comprised workshops, discussions among participants, onsite inspections, and lectures by leading specialists on topics such as economics, education, health promotion, environmental protection, administration and human rights. After

returning to their respective countries, the seminar participants are expected to promote gender-mainstreaming policies in their respective national or local governments. We asked participants questions about problems in their own countries and possible solutions for such problems. We also asked them which seminar program(s) was/were the most useful for them.

9 Annie Omega NAMAGONYA (Malawi)

Principal Gender and Development Officer, Department of Women's Affairs, Ministry of Women and Child Development

I learned that in Japan, in addition to the national government, local municipalities also have departments responsible for promoting a gender equal society. Since we do not have such departments in Malawi, I thought we must introduce such a system in my country. Visiting various organizations during the Seminar was very helpful. At the working women's center, for instance, I found that staff members were working hard to eradicate stereotypical notions concerning gender-based roles and improving the vocational skills of women who seek employment. On the other hand, I was surprised to learn that Japan, an advanced country, still has various problems concerning gender equality. Concerning such aspects, Japan as well as should probably learn from some developing countries.

11 Sharada Basyal BELBASE (Nepal)

Women Development Officer, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, Department of Women Development, Ministry of Women Children and Social Welfare

Of the various initiatives taken by the Nepali government to promote national development, I am responsible for promoting gender-mainstreaming policies. The governmental organization I am serving is the only organization in Nepal dedicated to social welfare for women and children. To raise women's social status and address gender-related problems as priority issues, it is essential to build facilities like the Gender Equality Centers in Japan, and reinforce the functions of the facilities. I was also impressed by Japan's preschool education. Based on what I learned in Japan, I hope to initiate various similar programs in Nepal.

12 Fatima Lamishi ADAMU (Nigeria)

Director, Planning, Research and Statistics, National Center for Women Development

During this seminar, we visited a hospital, Co-op, Gender Equality Center, an elementary school and a childcare center. At these facilities, I was able to confirm what I learned at the lectures. At my workplace, we are committed to promoting gender equality. However, all of our programs are only for women not for men or for both sexes. I also learned the vital importance of grassroots activities since they can influence local government policies. I plan to set up a model district and provide women there with opportunities to express their views and opinions.

13 Andrew IKI (Papua New Guinea)

Program Officer-CLDCs, Department of Community Development, Ministry of Community Development

In Papua New Guinea, as our primary task, I hope to review existing laws and policies. Based on knowledge I gained during this seminar, I hope to reorganize all our gender-related programs. Moreover, through my service at Ministry of Community Development, I hope to encourage the government of Papua New Guinea and other related organizations to promote gender-mainstreaming policies. I will also ask these organizations, NGOs and private funds to incorporate gender-sensitive perspectives in their action programs.

14 Octavio Da Costa Monteiro DE ALMEIDA (Timor-Leste)

Director, National Director of Policy and Planning, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries

To reinforce our organizations and improve their operational efficiency, I found it very effective to introduce approaches and techniques adopted in Japan. I believe that our priority issue is the improvement of our services as well as operation productivity and efficiency. I plan to allocate 2% of our Ministry's budget to technical support for women farmers in rural farming villages as a way to increase farmers' incomes and improve food production.

10 Erika Lizbeth CORNELIO RAMOS (Mexico)

Researcher and Assessor, Division of Equality and Gender, Women's Institute of Quintana Roo

Although Mexico has already established a legal system to support workers, few Mexicans know the concept of work-life balance, which was introduced during the Seminar. The concept of work-life balance can provide a logical basis for improving women's working conditions. The concept can also encourage women to seek greater freedom and working efficiency. I also believe that the Seminar program titled "Women and Development" is very important and useful for women all over the world.

15 Maria Noel AVAS APOLITO (Uruguay)

Assistant of UNIFEM Funded Project, National Institute of Women

It was extremely interesting to learn about the gender-mainstreaming activities being implemented in Kitakyushu City under the leadership of Kitakyushu Municipal Gender Equality Center. The case in Kitakyushu demonstrates that partnerships between local governments and NGOs can be effective to improve the environment toward women's achievement of gender equality. I believe that training and seminar programs are essential for imparting knowledge and information. With this in mind, I plan to establish a training course on gender mainstreaming at a local level.



SINGH (India)

and Child Development, Government of Rajasthan

greatest elements inhibiting gender mainstream-communities about women and girls. Although the initiatives to address gender-related problems, the this seminar, I was particularly impressed by the children. At the center, staff members showed re-also reinforce educational systems for preschool grams for capacity building of girls in puberty.

Promotion Project for International Understanding Intercultural Cooking Class

At the Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women (KFAW), we organize friendly exchange programs with people in various other countries to promote international understanding and ultimately raise women's social status primarily in the Asia and Pacific region. As part of such efforts, we recently held a cooking class in English basically for Japanese junior and senior high school students. As a cooking instructor of this program, we invited Barrett BALVANZ, an American working as an international relations coordinator with the city of Kitakyushu.

Although in daily cooking, we often use such terms as *mijingiri* (finely chopped) and *yaki-iro-wo-tsukeru* (to brown), few Japanese people know English terms for these expressions since such English terms seldom appear in our school's English textbooks. Learning cooking from a native English speaker, therefore, can provide students with an ideal opportunity to learn terms that are frequently used in daily life. At the same time, by inviting a male instructor, we intended to eradicate the deeply embedded stereotype that cooking is solely a woman's task.

On the event day, a total of 20 students (15 female and five male students) gathered at the venue. At the beginning, Balvanz briefly explained two Mexican dishes and dessert recipes that he selected for the class. Although Mexican dishes are not so popular in Japan, he mentioned that in his hometown in California, located very near Mexico, he frequently ate Mexican dishes. Because he showed photographs of the dishes to be prepared while explaining their recipes in English, students were able to visualize the dishes they would soon make.

After the briefing, students formed several groups. The first dish to prepare was monkey bread, a sweet dessert often served after hot and spicy Mexican dishes. The name of the dessert is believed to come from the fruit of the baobab tree, a favorite of monkeys, because the dessert looks very similar to the fruit. When we baked the monkey bread, it rose swiftly in the oven, filling the room with a sweet aroma. Along with the dessert, we prepared *burritos*, a typical Mexican dish, comprising vegetables, chicken and other ingredients placed in a rolled *tortilla*, a type of a thin bread made of wheat or corn; and *nachos*, deep-fried *tortilla chips* on which other ingredients are placed on top. While students were cooking, Balvanz visited individual groups, showing the cooking processes and teaching various English phrases, such as "pop in the microwave" and "melt the butter."



▲ Balvanz' cooking class

One and a half hours after starting the cooking, all groups completed preparing the food. Although not all students in each group knew each other, by cooking together, they all became acquainted. After eating the prepared dishes together, they played some games often played by American children at home parties.

Finally, Balvanz talked about relations between men and women in the United States. There, he said that men and women work more as equal partners, selecting their occupation regardless of gender. With support given from individual workplaces, American men and women also share childcare responsibilities, even though in Japan childcare is basically considered solely the woman's responsibility. According to Balvanz, however, since the United States is a large country, with diverse ethnic groups and a multitude of cultures, people's attitudes toward gender equality vary from region to region, depending on their religion, ethnicity and various other factors. Although some people still maintain conservative approaches to gender, many women have worked hard to gain equal rights on their own initiative. He emphasized the importance of acting, while maintaining a strong sense of responsibility for one's own speech and behavior. He also regretted that nowadays fewer people than before have a strong sense of responsibility.



◀ Balvanz' lectures participants regarding gender roles and gender equality

Despite the short time for the program, participants learned some recipes, enjoyed the delicacies they prepared together, played some games, and learned from the lecture. Moreover, participants enjoyed talking with Balvanz using easy English terms, and learned some English expressions used in daily life. Some participants confessed that they had expected a female instructor since this was a cooking class. This statement made us realize that even young students associate cooking with women. We hope that the event was effective in promoting international understanding among young people. At the same time, we also hope that a cooking class by a male instructor was effective in fostering in young minds broader perspectives regarding men and women's responsibilities. Moreover, we desire that this kind of initiative will help liberate them from gender-based stereotypes.

KFAW College Seminar

What Color is Peace for Women? Thinking about Peace, Violence and Gender with Popoki

At the Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women (KFAW), we organize KFAW College, a series of lectures and workshops on various matters basically pertaining to international cooperation, international understanding and current affairs. By offering up-to-date information on these matters, KFAW College seeks to foster human resources with a global perspective. This year's KFAW College comprises a total of eight programs (a lecture and practical workshops), all designed to foster workshop facilitators who have global and gender-sensitive perspectives. Of the eight programs, the second was a lecture on various challenges facing the international community. As lecturer, we invited Professor Ronni ALEXANDER at the Graduate School of International Cooperation Studies, Kobe University.



◀ Popoki, the character from Professor Alexander's book

© Popoki Peace Project / Ronni Alexander 2005

Professor Alexander, who specializes in international relations and peace education, in 2006 initiated the Popoki Peace Project, designed to promote peace education. "Popoki" is a Hawaiian term meaning "cat." It is also the name of her pet. In 2007, she published a picture book, entitled *Popoki, What Color is Peace?* (Epic). There is also a DVD version (Iwanami Shoten 2005). The book discusses various issues relating to peace based on Popoki's daily life. In this way, Popoki is a great help to her as her good companion.



◀ Professor Alexander

First, after exchanging greetings and getting to know those sitting close, participants formed small groups of two or three persons. Each group was then asked to choose three essential elements of peace from among the list below:

*Diversity	*Creativity/ Imagination	*Education
* Nature	*Housing/ Food/ Shelter	*Trust
*Freedom	*Law	*Communication
*Security/ safety	*Life	*Love
*Wealth	*Social justice	*Action
*Weapons	*Art	*???

Most of the groups chose "life," but there were also groups which did not choose it. With just this one exercise, we were really able to feel how broad a concept "peace" is. Also, we understood how each individual has a different definition for peace.

Next, using some quizzes and the DVD version of Popoki, Professor Alexander gave a lecture regarding peace, gender and violence. She pointed out the amount of money used on military budgets is more than 80 times what UN agencies spend on development. She also pointed out that war and gender violence are still major problems. For example, in Rwanda rape was used as a weapon and method of domination during the civil war. In particular, sometimes intentionally it was used to make enemy women pregnant or to infect them with HIV. She explained that at the root of this gender violence in war is gender inequality and limited access to social resources women have during times of peace.

According to Professor Alexander, violence can be discussed in terms of not only direct but also structural violence such as poverty, discrimination and environmental destruction. She also discussed as well cultural violence. In the case of cultural violence, cultural justification for direct and/or structural violence is given. In order to eliminate violence, She stressed that work has to be done at all levels including international organization such as the UN, states, NGOs and individuals.



▲ Professor Alexander signs the book for participants after the lecture

Following the lecture, *Popoki, What Color is Peace?* was sold, together with postcards and stickers featuring Popoki. Professor Alexander signed and drew a picture of Popoki on each copy sold. Participants formed a long queue not only to have their books signed but also to talk to her in person.

Although the topics of war and violence are extremely grave, the participants truly enjoyed the lecture. This was thanks to not only the lovely character of Popoki but also to Professor Alexander's exceptional sense of humor.

FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS REPORTS [2008-2009]

(Access other foreign correspondents' reports on a website: <http://www.kfaw.or.jp/about/18-report.html.en>)

The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child

Disappearing Daughters in India

Meeta SINGH (India)

India is a vast country of more than a billion people, and the world's largest democracy. It is also a land where the ancient scriptures advocate the worship of women, the original land of the Mother Goddess. The scriptures, mythology and folklore are replete with stories that eulogize the honor and respect accorded to women. India is also one of the first countries in the world that granted women the right to vote. Moreover, the Indian Constitution is one of the most progressive in the world. Alongside this, however, there is another body of evidence. The official statistics that are presented in government reports show that men outnumber women in India, unlike in most countries where reverse is the case.

Analysis of data from India's census reveals that in the last century, 35 million females are missing from the population of the country due to practices related to gender discrimination. The worst kind of violence against the girl child is female foeticide, where she is eliminated from the womb simply because she is a girl.

Although India is a varied canvas of peoples of various castes, creed, languages and socio-cultural beliefs, the son preference has remained strong throughout generations and centuries. This son preference in India prevails across caste and class in both rural and urban communities and also amongst educated and employed women. There are innumerable social norms around the son preference varying from economic support for parents in old age; the dowry his wife would bring into the home; social security for his aging parents and household support in the form of a daughter-in-law. The patriarchal socio-cultural framework wherein continuation of the family name, death rituals and religious rites assume great importance only fuel the desire for a son. The status of the woman in the family is tied to the number of sons she bears.

Traditional neglect of the girl child in terms of nutrition, health care, education, exclusion from opportunities and deprivation of love and care are now replaced by simpler, easily available, accessible and affordable technologies leading to pre-birth elimination of females. In addition to this, studies suggest that with the shift to small family size, along with a desperate, continuing desire for at least one son, there is increased acceptance and use of sex selection tests to achieve parental preferences. (Visaria, 2003).

Indifferent administration and covert social acceptance towards sex selective abortions violate the rights of millions of daughters to be born and live a life of dignity. Although the government of India and a people's movement towards social awakening is slowly gaining momentum, the journey ahead is long and hard.

Reference:

Leela VISARIA, "The missing girls"

<http://www.india-seminar.com/2003/532/532%20leela%20visaria.html>

Reaching Out to Street Children

Val HAM (Philippines)

One day, my friend Odin told me and other friends about a food outreach mission he had been planning nearby Tondo, Manila where street children frequent. These street children can be seen roaming the streets all over the metropolis. Many beg from cars stopped at intersections. Others resort to petty crimes like snatching mobile phones or other valuables from unsuspecting victims. Youngsters range from a relatively healthy and clean group of children, many of whom are the children of street vendors who are selling their goods nearby to some who are malnourished; dirty; and "high" on cough syrup or solvent cement; wandering the streets alone and or waiting for their ultimate fates. Some resort to prostitution to support their addiction, whether on their own, or forced by pimps who offer them to pedophiles. In Tondo, street children would go around and beg from vendors and buyers; sleep on sidewalks at night; and start begging again the following day. At any time, they could easily be abused or violated by anyone who just happens to trip on them.

The first thought that comes to mind when I see these children is "Where are their parents?" "Did they ever go to school?" "Did they ever have a place they called home?" My friends and I were both amused and saddened by the scenes we saw. Without a care in the world, the children seemed genuinely happy, playing tag and running around in mud and dirt on barefoot, even without having the latest toys seen on TV. They were also delighted when we gave them some bread, milk and fruits we brought with us.

As our group continued on our "crusade" to rid the world of hunger and poverty, even for just one morning, we encountered these three girls who had just woke up on a sidewalk. I asked them where their parents were, and the eldest child told us they are sisters. She also mentioned that their parents just disappeared about a few months ago and never came back to the shanty in Tondo where they lived. Risking starvation and abuse from individuals where they lived, they decided to become wanderers, depending on the charity of people for their food and clothing. The elder sister mentioned she had to carry her youngest sister most of the time because of her trouble with walking and running.

Her story touched all of us. At her young age, she had become the leader of their family. But growing up on the streets, without proper upbringing and education, what will happen to them? As we moved on to other areas, this thought lingered in all of our minds.



◀ Another "beautiful" day awaits the street children...

Children in the 2008 Sichuan Earthquake

Keiko OHAMA (China)

This past May 12, 2008, Sichuan Province, China was rocked by a magnitude eight earthquake that left a tragedy in its wake: 69,197 dead, 374,176 injured and 18,237 missing (as of July 17, 2008). At dawn, all of China was shocked by the devastation, but what drew tears more than anything else were a large number of children amongst the victims. Kindergartens and elementary school buildings toppled like dominos. Those who did not escape on time were buried underneath the rubble. Many lost their lives. I did not have the heart to watch those parents crumble in tears after losing their only child whom they had lovingly raised and placed their hopes in.

Public opinion asks, "Why were the schools, which serve as evacuation shelters overseas, hit so hard?" There are ways to explain the relatively high number of victims at schools. People have pointed to slipshod construction; aged buildings; and inadequate antiseismic capacity all of which is being investigated as we speak. In any case, this natural disaster treated children, who are the weaker elements of society, so unfairly that the sadness cannot be erased.

Efforts to help the victims of this earthquake instantly spread across the land. Workplaces and citizens' groups spontaneously organized fund-raising activities and donations piled in from all over. Memorial services were held everywhere to pray for a peaceful repose. A moment of silence was observed at Olympic celebrations and entertainment events. And, families living in urban areas offered to adopt children who were orphaned by the disaster. Everyone wanted to help in some sort of way. Everyone cared. The fact that this could even happen was because the Chinese government allowed the media to report the earthquake and the media responded in a big way.

Nevertheless, amidst the media's jubilation over this first-time improvement in freedom of the press, knowledgeable persons who were sensitive to gender and children's rights calmly and courageously analyzed and suggested this as a form of hidden violence against children. Children are easy targets of the media and the media is undeniably a social motivator. But, if you put yourself in the children's place, what can you do? Experts criticized media journalists for repeatedly shoving microphones at children in the stricken area and reopening wounds by having them talk about their sad experiences in public. It was tantamount to causing secondary injuries to the children. According to the Convention of the Rights of the Child, children are to be prioritized. If that is the case, they should have been left alone even if their interviews made for good news.

On the lessons learned from past natural disasters and gender issues around the world, women's groups in China came together and promptly proposed "consideration for the needs and rights of women in the stricken area" to the country's earthquake response headquarters. They lobbied to guarantee women, old and young, equal rights and basic needs at all stages of the recovery process. Actions like this go one step beyond emotional bonds to help build fair mechanisms that are backed by social responsibilities and professionalism. This is a model of true help for the socially weak in dire straits. These women's groups were praised for taking the initiative ahead of other NGOs.

THE FORUM WINDOW

Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women (KFAW) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

The United Nations has declared the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005-2014 (DESD) with the aim of achieving sustainable development which takes account of the balance among environmental, economic and social development. ESD is a holistic education which integrates conventional environmental education with other fields of education, such as gender, welfare and cross-cultural understanding.

In Kitakyushu, the Kitakyushu ESD Council was established in September 2006 with KFAW as its Secretariat, and then initiated ESD activities under the nickname of *Mirai Palette* (Palette for the Future). The Council was accredited as a Regional Centre of Expertise (RCE) by the United Nations University in December 2006 and was contracted by the Ministry of the Environment, Government of Japan for the Promotion of the DESD Project (fiscal years 2006 and 2007). The Council has 57 member organizations and conducts various activities, such as Kitakyushu ESD pilot projects, publication of newsletters, lectures on Kitakyushu ESD and monitoring surveys on ESD in Kitakyushu.

In July 2008, we participated in the third International RCE Meeting held in Barcelona, Spain. 130 representatives from 55 RCEs around the world held separate discussions divided into six thematic groups and four continental groups. A pro tem Asia-Pacific RCE committee was formed to promote exchange among the RCEs in the region. The Kitakyushu ESD Council has become one of the committee members.

ESD is a holistic education designed to develop human resources who can take action towards sustainable society, but the majority of cases reported on ESD concerns environment. There are very few cases which address gender issues. We, however, are trying to create a society and hand it over to next generation: specifically, a society where everyone on earth, including men, women, the elderly and children, is satisfied with basic needs (e.g., food, shelter and education) and live peacefully and happily. For this purpose, it is important to ensure equity and equality in society along with environmentally and economically sustainable development. One essential ESD element is to foster a perspective which respects individuality without a judgment based on gender.

KFAW, which has conducted activities on empowerment of women in Asian and other countries, can play an important role in mainstreaming gender into ESD. We will continue our efforts to realize a just and sustainable society by joining hands with people worldwide.

Masako OTA
KFAW Senior Researcher

INFORMATION

Q&A Corner

Question

In Japan, many children are keen on playing video games when they play whether alone or with friends. How do the children of your home country play?

Yasuhiro HOSODA, Kitakyushu, Japan

Answer



Bhawana UPADHYAY,
Nepal

There are not many recreation and amusement centers for children in Nepal. Even though there are some places, they are not easily accessible to middle and lower class children. Private and boarding schools teach computer to their students. However, very few children have access to computers in their home, even in the city areas. And video games too are the prize beyond the reach of many children.

In rural areas, children often play local games besides usual games like soccer, badminton, etc. The local games are *Dandi-Biyo*, *Kabaddi*, etc. *Dandi-Biyo* is a very popular game in Nepal. To play *Dandi-Biyo*, players use a stick which is about 60 cm long and wooden pins which are 15 cm long. First, the players dig a hole whose diameter is shorter than the pin on the ground and then places the pin across the hole. The first

player puts the end of the stick in the hole and grips the other end. The player then shakes the stick to hit the pin and make it fly. If others catch the flying pin, the player's turn is over. If the flying pin drops to the ground, the player receives the point. The player who drops the pins most times and flies them the farthest wins the game.

On the other hand, children in urban areas spend most time of their time watching TV. There are some children who watch TV three to five hours daily. But many children also enjoy sports and conversation the same as children in rural areas.

COVER PROFILE



Mie KUWAMURA
Air traffic controller

The main job of an air traffic controller is to guide in aircraft in order to expedite and maintain a safe and orderly flow of air traffic. Mie Kuwamura chose this occupation because she liked to observe flying airplanes.

At one time, only men were able to do this kind of job. Now half of newly hired air traffic controllers are women. Kitakyushu Airport, where she is working, does not have the radar. Consequently, she must depend on her own eyes to watch the airplanes. Considerable concentration is necessary because airframes are sometimes difficult to see due to the weather. Also air traffic controllers must not concentrate on one point alone but the whole picture. Thus, she had a hard time at first adapting. An air controller's job is demanding. It also does not permit failure. Kuwamura after making sure that takeoffs and landings are safely completed feels satisfied. Her goal is to increasingly respond calmly to any kind of situation.



Starting from the issue (June 2008), we capitalize the last names of persons at the beginning of articles. We adopted this policy so that our readers can easily distinguish last names in spite of different customs regarding the writing of family names.



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.

