

Asian Breeze

No. **57**
November
2009

KITAKYUSHU FORUM ON ASIAN WOMEN (KFAW) November 2009 Triannual Publication



Government officers from various nations, who participated in the 8th JICA seminar on Gender Mainstreaming Policies in KITAKYUSHU, JAPAN



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Women Today

Ending Violence Against Women: What will it Take?

Violence against Women is one of the most pervasive human rights violations in the world, especially domestic and sexual violence. Often, the two go together. Based on leading surveys, UNIFEM found that as many as 56 per cent of women who suffer from domestic abuse experience both physical and sexual violence by their partners.

For too long, women suffered such violence in shame and silence. After years of struggle, women's rights activists have succeeded in putting the issue squarely on the public agenda. International and regional conventions, such as CEDAW, the Belem do Para Convention in Latin America and the Africa Protocol, bind governments to their obligations to prevent, respond to and punish all forms of violence against women and girls.

Today, a record number of countries have adopted national laws, policies and action plans to combat this crime. The crowning of this global momentum occurred in 2008, with the launch of the UN Secretary-General's *UNiTE to End Violence against Women Campaign*, which challenges governments, the private sector, world leaders and individual men, women and youth, to join forces in making existing commitments a reality by 2015, the deadline for achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

In announcing this campaign, the Secretary-General stated: "Violence against women is an issue that cannot wait.... No country, no culture, no woman young or old is immune to this scourge.... And we know that when we work to eradicate violence against women, we empower our greatest resource for development."

Yet countless millions of women around the world experience domestic violence, many with no means of escape. Marital rape is still not considered a crime in many cases, particularly where control over women's sexuality is basic to widely held beliefs in male entitlement. Women who are economically dependent on their husbands are also more willing to tolerate the abuse, especially those who have no other means of livelihood.

Violence against women is a complex issue, one deeply rooted in gender discrimination, which will not end without much greater progress on gender equality. The World Health Organization's multi-country study in 2005 found that beliefs about male authority — held by both men and women — 'justify' wife-beating for a range of causes including going out without telling her spouse, neglecting the children, not preparing the food, not completing housework, arguing or talking back to her spouse, disobeying her spouse, refusing to have sex, asking about other women, talking to another man and being unfaithful or suspected of being unfaithful by her spouse.



Inés ALBERDI

Executive Director
United Nations
Development Fund for
Women (UNIFEM)

The 'frontline' institutions responsible for protection and support are usually weak lines of defense against such beliefs, owing in part to poor training and limited resources. According to a 2008 International Violence against Women Survey, carried out in seven countries, only a third of women experiencing male violence report their case to the police. Among those reported, less than 5 per cent lead to charges and even fewer result in convictions. Even when successfully prosecuted, sentences may never be enforced. Where protection orders exist, police may not respond in a timely way.

The global economic crisis reminds us that the issue is urgent. Previous crises have shown that as job losses mount, and with them economic insecurity, women and girls are at particularly high risks of domestic abuse, violence and exploitation, including sexual exploitation and trafficking.

Yet, even in better times, budgets to combat gender-based violence have been meager compared to the magnitude of the problem. Given the drastic shortfall in resources and the heightened risks to women, especially poor women, UNIFEM has launched an urgent appeal for donations to the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, a global mechanism that channels expertise and resources to support local action in developing countries. Established by a General Assembly resolution in 1996, the Trust Fund was initially founded thanks to a grant by the Government of Japan.

Since its founding, the UN Trust Fund has supported hundreds of national and local initiatives that have generated a wealth of knowledge about **strategies that work** to end violence against women. Groups supported are those who have lived this reality in countries and communities worldwide. All of us, if we are serious about ending violence against women, must show them our support.

http://www.unifem.org/gender_issues/violence_against_women/trust_fund.php

Profile of Inés Alberdi

Inés Alberdi of Spain, formerly a professor of Sociology at the University of Madrid, assumed her duties as Executive Director of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) on 4 June 2008. Ms. Alberdi has worked for more than 25 years on gender issues and in politics. Ms. Alberdi has published extensively on family and women's issues.

From 2003 to 2007, Ms. Alberdi was an elected Deputy in the Madrid Assembly. She also served as an expert for the Equal Opportunities Unit of the European Commission on the network-Family and Work and Diversification of Occupational Choices for Women (1998-2000).

Gender-Sensitive Measures to Prevent HIV/AIDS

Part 3

Effective Anti-HIV/AIDS Measures



Yoko TSURUGI

Medical Staff of Angel Women's
Hospital and researcher at the
Research Institute of Tuberculosis

As explained in two previous lectures, no one is immune to HIV infection. Unless effective measures are taken, this infectious disease will rapidly sweep across society.

In this third lecture, I will discuss what those effective measures are. Unfortunately, we do not yet have the means to overcome the AIDS epidemic. Even so, AIDS remedies are steadily improving. Although we have neither a medicine to completely cure the disease nor a vaccine to prevent HIV infection, we do have anti-HIV drugs that can halt the progress of the disease and which are already in wide use. Use of these drugs in the early stage enables infected people to continue their daily activities without developing symptoms. To ensure that infected people begin to take remedies during the early stage, however, they must first know that they are HIV positive before they develop symptoms. To know whether they are positive, they need to undergo HIV tests. Although the tests comprise simple blood tests, many people are reluctant to take the tests due to the lack of knowledge about HIV/AIDS and prejudice against the disease. It is extremely regrettable that many infected people miss opportunities to receive effective remedies simply because they do not take the tests in time.

Despite the progress of remedies, we still do not have a medicine that can completely cure the disease. Once infected, an individual must take the medicine for life. It is therefore essential to prevent HIV infection. To prevent HIV infection, use of condoms has been proved effective. Yet, constant use of condoms is not as easy as you may suppose. There are many factors that inhibit the use of condoms. For some people, condoms are too expensive. In some regions, condoms are not easily available. Above all, many people, especially women, feel embarrassed to buy such products and ask partners to use them.

In Cambodia, where anti-HIV/AIDS measures have been much more successful than in other countries, a campaign titled "100% condom promotion" is believed to have been extremely effective in reducing the HIV prevalence rate. This campaign not only imparted the message that condom use can prevent HIV infection, but also made the product image more visible and familiar. Condoms were provided at

affordable prices, sometimes for free. Posters of condoms were placed at every corner of towns. Supermarkets and convenience stores located condoms next to cash registers in an attempt to change customer sentiment associated with the merchandise. The campaign successfully changed Cambodian people's mindset. Although people used to be embarrassed to buy and use condoms, they now take them for granted. At local festivals in Cambodia, I found condom campaign tents standing among food stands. Moreover, I often saw people, particularly motorcycle riders, wearing T-shirts with logos and designs of the condom campaign.

As indicated by this Cambodian case, anti-HIV/AIDS measures should address discrimination, prejudice and taboo. In addition to discrimination and prejudice against people infected with HIV, we must eradicate the sex taboo, along with social discrimination and prejudice against homosexual men, sex workers, drug abusers and other groups vulnerable to HIV infection, including women, young people and immigrants. If we truly hope to take effective anti-HIV/AIDS measures, it is not enough to simply instruct vulnerable people — female sex workers for instance — to use condoms. We must create an environment where these women can access medical institutions and receive HIV tests without hesitation. We must also provide these women with opportunities for education and job training, so that they can obtain other job opportunities if so desired.

Effective anti-HIV/AIDS measures should incorporate not only healthcare programs, but also initiatives to address educational, gender and other social problems along with the eradication of poverty. Addressing such widespread problems requires strong leadership on the part of national governments. However, more importantly, the commitment of each and every citizen in anti-HIV/AIDS campaigns, based on the full awareness that anti-HIV/AIDS measures are essential not only for vulnerable groups, but also for every citizen.

Launching the KFAW Network of Researchers

The Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women (KFAW), which will celebrate its 20th anniversary in 2010, is implementing various reforms. KFAW through these reforms aims to reorganize its projects to meet changing social demands and fulfill its responsibility as a public-interest corporation. Of the various new projects that KFAW has started, this article introduces two survey and research projects for this fiscal year.

1 The KFAW Network of Researchers

KFAW has collaborated with researchers on gender issues since its establishment. In order to strengthen the relationship with these and other researchers, KFAW established the KFAW Network of Asian Researchers in May of 2009. At this Network's meetings, specialists in a wide variety of academic fields who are living or working in and around Fukuoka and Kitakyushu hold discussions to share results of their studies about Japan and other Asian countries, from gender-sensitive perspectives. Moreover, the Network develops various collaboration programs to seek solutions for diverse challenges, and organize lectures aimed at sharing study results with the public and expanding the networks in and outside Japan.

2 Developing Programs to Prevent Dating DV

Among the KFAW Network members, researchers and activists specializing in domestic violence (DV) prevention have gathered to develop a new program aimed at preventing dating DV — physical or verbal violence imposed on unmarried partners. Incidence of dating DV is currently increasing, particularly among young people. To prevent DV among adult partners and married couples, it is believed that young people should be taught that dating DV is a criminal act.

◆1st Lecture (June 23, 2009)

Benazir and Chia—Two Asian Women I Met

Etsuko KITA, President, Japanese Red Cross
Kyushu International College of Nursing

Professor Kita lectured on Asian women's freedom and development, referring to Benazir Bhutto, the first woman prime minister in Pakistan and the entire Islamic world. She also mentioned Chia, a woman whom the speaker met at the Mothers' Center in Cambodia. Introducing women's situations in Pakistan and Cambodia, Professor Kita discussed problems confronting Asian women. The lecture evoked strong empathy from many audience members.



◆2nd Lecture and Seminar (July 15, 2009)

Problems of the Elderly Living in Yahata-Higashi Ward

Harumichi YUASA, Vice President,
Kyushu International University

In addition to care problems, challenges concerning elderly people include lack of support for those who live alone and die in solitude. The lecture focused on situations of elderly residents in Yahata-Higashi Ward, Kitakyushu City, since the ward particularly suffers from population aging due to outflow of young residents as well as falling birthrates. After discussing the present situation of the ward, the speaker explained measures taken by authorities and community organizations. Following the lecture, lively discussions were held, involving audience members about initiatives for the future of Japan's aging society.



◆3rd Lecture (August 9, 2009) Do You Know Dating DV?

• What Is Dating DV?

Yuki KUBOTA, Professor, Kyushu Sangyo University

• Dating DV Prevention Programs

Keiko NAKATA, Representative of Anti-DV Nagasaki

Regarding dating DV, Professor Kubota gave a presentation on her survey of college students in Kitakyushu. Ms. Nakata, who visits junior and senior high schools to promote student awareness of dating DV, also reported on her activities, the current situation of dating DV, preferable measures to take and important points for initiatives to prevent dating DV. Both speakers emphasized the vital importance of gender education for young children, along with the need for both male and female students to develop communication skills based on mutual respect between men and women.



◀ Professor KUBOTA



Ms. NAKATA ▶

For further information, please visit the KFAW website.

2009 Research Themes

KFAW Visiting Researchers

Theme: Transnational Migration from Southeast Asia to East Asia and Transformation of Re-productive Labor

Reiko OGAWA, Associate Professor of
Kyushu University Asia Center

The accelerated process of globalization and restructuring of the society brought about two dynamics: feminization of migration and globalization of reproductive work in East Asia where the low fertility rate, aging society and care work deficit has been dealt with by 'importing' Southeast Asian women either as care workers or marriage partners. This research aims to compare the policy, institutions and discourses on Southeast Asian migrant women in Korea, Taiwan and Japan and problematize the way in which these societies deal with care and reproductive labor under rapid demographic transformation. It questions the policies and institutions that shape the migration of Southeast Asian women to East Asia and the construction of public discourse that may represent certain anxieties. Finally, it hopes to enable the issue of migrant women in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan to become visible and discuss the policy implications for supporting the migrant women in each respective country.



Co-researchers

Eun-Shil KIM, Professor, Ewha Women's University
Frank Tsen-Yung WANG, Associate Professor,
Institute of Health and Welfare Policy, National
Yang Ming University
Hsiao Chun, Hannah, LIU, Assistant Professor,
College of Human Ecology, Shih Chien University

Theme: The Child Health under Conflict and Disaster Condition in Sri Lanka from the Point of View of Gender

Ikuko SEKI, Professor of the Japanese Red
Cross Kyushu International College of Nursing

Civil wars and natural disasters have an immeasurable impact on the health states, particularly on children's physical and mental development. Although studies have been conducted regarding health conditions of children affected by either civil war or natural disasters, virtually no surveys have been carried out on child victims of these incidents. As implied by existing studies, impact on children differs according to gender. Health-related problems of girls who are entering puberty are therefore unique and different from the problems of boys.



Since Asia is expected to remain vulnerable to natural disasters and ethnic conflict, nursing professionals engaged in international cooperation and relief activities in this region should work to mitigate the impact of both problems on children including their health so as to ensure the children's sound development.

With this in mind, we will survey the health states of children in Trincomalee, an area affected by both civil war and natural disasters. We will analyze the different situations between boys and girls from gender-sensitive perspectives. We will also suggest initiatives for supporting the sound development of children — particularly girls — who are suffering from the impact of social and natural challenges.

Co-researchers

Etsuko KITA, President of the Japanese Red Cross
Kyushu International College of Nursing
Naomi IMAMURA, graduate student at the Japanese Red
Cross Kyushu International College of Nursing

KEAW Summer Seminar- "Michelle Obama: A First Lady Who Is Changing the United States"

On August 10th, KFAW co-organized its summer seminar together with the Public Affairs Section of the Consulate of the United States, Fukuoka, Japan (Fukuoka American Center). 170 audience members (a number far exceeding the expected level) gathered from Fukuoka and other prefectures to eagerly listen to the lecture and actively participate in the Q.&A. session.

The lecture was presented by Ms. Liza Mundy, a staff writer for *The Washington Post* and author of *Michelle Obama*, a biography of Mrs. Barack Obama published in October 2008. During her visit to Japan, Ms. Mundy gave lectures only in Tokyo and Kitakyushu.

At her lecture for the summer seminar, Ms. Mundy stated presently Mrs. Obama is even more popular than President Obama. In a recent poll in the United States, Ms. Mundy said, over 80% of the public stated that they liked the First Lady. Ms. Mundy also remarked that Mrs. Obama is becoming increasingly popular among Republican women. The First Lady, is particularly eager to support relatives of military

personnel as well as various services and volunteer activities. Mrs. Obama also wants to further open the White House to the general public.

Mundy also noted Mrs. Obama's efforts to seek an optimum work-life balance. Mrs. Obama well understands many women's struggles to maintain good work-life balance since she herself raised two daughters while her husband, Barack, was busy with political

activities. When many schools closed due to the spread of H1N1 influenza, many workers found it difficult to take a pay leave. Mrs. Obama believes that more parents (either father or mother) should be allowed to take paid leaves when their children become sick. Under the current severe economic situation, however, realizing her vision seems to be difficult, Mundy stated.

As a leading female journalist in the United States, Mundy also referred to her own battles to maintain a good work-life balance. She concluded her lecture by stating that the Obama administration is well aware of the problems confronting working parents. Mundy also emphasized that the administration is committed to changing conventional systems in a direction desired by the public.

The Q.&A. session lasted 45 minutes. Topics included the recent increase in the number of women with occupations, desired governmental support for working parents and the personal experiences of audience members. In the questionnaire distributed immediately

after the program, many audience members stated that the seminar provided them with a good opportunity to reconsider their own work-life balance, following Mrs. Obama's model. Participants also stated that after the seminar they felt more affinity with Mrs.



▲Ms. Liza Mundy, a staff writer, the Washington Post

Obama. Mundy strongly encouraged audience members who are employed to make known their demands and opinions at their respective workplaces. This message truly made the lecture even more impressive and rewarding.

The 8th Seminar on Gender Mainstreaming Policies for Government Officers

The Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women (KFAW) annually holds the Seminar on Gender Mainstreaming Policies for Government Officers under an agreement with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA Kyushu International Center). The Seminar's target is national and local government officers in developing countries who are responsible for gender mainstreaming policies. The Seminar is designed to foster such officers' abilities to develop and implement effective and comprehensive policies to mainstream gender-based perspectives in addressing various problems in developing countries. It also aims to ultimately realize a gender-equal society in respective countries.

This year, KFAW held the 8th seminar for nearly one month from June 25 to July 24, 2009 with eight trainees from six countries.

During the first week, lectures on general gender theory were presented to participants at the JICA Tokyo International Center. The following week, participants moved to the JICA Kyushu International Center to attend lectures on gender mainstreaming policies in specific areas such as education, environmental protection, production and consumption activities. In addition to lectures, seminar programs included workshops, discussions among trainees and observations. During the program on gender mainstreaming at nursery, for instance, in the morning, trainees attended a lecture given by a staff member of the Kitakyushu City government office, and then in the afternoon visited an actual childcare center.

Trainees were also expected to prepare action plans for promoting gender-mainstreaming policies in their respective national or local governments based on what they learned during the seminar. To ensure their action plans would be reasonable, viable and effective, KFAW offered lectures on themes such as "Gender Responsive Project Cycle Management (PCM)" and "Gender Sensitive Training and Gender Analysis." Moreover, KFAW organized an "Action Plan Presentation" to which specialists concerned were invited.

On July 17th, KFAW co-organized with JICA Kyushu International Center a "Country Report Presentation" for the general public. This presentation was designed to promote public understanding about global gender-mainstreaming efforts as well as related efforts of JICA and KFAW. At the presentation, trainees introduced profiles of their own countries, gender problems and

obstacles that should be overcome in order to achieve gender mainstreaming in their respective countries as well as their own action plans.

Out of the eight speakers' presentations, the one given by Ms. Dijana Tepšić, the trainee from Bosnia and Herzegovina, attracted the most audience attention. She gave a report on a 5-year national program to eradicate domestic violence (DV), a serious problem in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as other countries. In her presentation, she introduced a nationwide campaign titled "Family without Violence." To promote public awareness of the need to stop DV, the campaign uses various means; of these, audio-video media seem to be particularly impressive and effective. Ms. Tepšić concluded her presentation by urging the audience to think gender issues with patience, broad perspectives, and an open and positive attitude toward other people.



▲Ms. Tepšić's CD label
SLUM & Dijana Tepšić, a famous hip-hop and R&B group in the Republic of Srpska, produced a song called "Nisam Sama" (I'm not alone) for the "Family without Violence" campaign.
To listen to the music, visit YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IEHdwH8kzo8>).
Ms. Tepšić (center)



▲Presentation by Ms. Tepšić

Nepali Women NOW: A Foreign Correspondent Visits Schools and Women's Groups in Kitakyushu

To raise women's social status and help realize a gender-equal society, it is essential that people of diverse backgrounds deepen their mutual understanding. From this standpoint, KFAW invited Ms. Bhawana Upadhyay, one of its foreign correspondents from Nepal July 10-13, 2009. During that time, KFAW organized various events for her, such as a special school class, lecture and cooking class, for Kitakyushu-based women groups and students, ranging from elementary to university students.

The invited foreign correspondent was Ms. Bhawana Upadhyay, who is committed to raising women's social status in South Asia as a program manager of Oxfam. Oxfam is an international NPO devoted to eradicating poverty worldwide. In Kitakyushu, Ms. Upadhyay visited the Council of Women's Groups of Kokura-Minami Ward, where she offered a lecture regarding the situation of Nepali women. According to Ms. Upadhyay, Nepali women's status is improving, following the country's ratification in 1991 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. However, the literacy rate among women still remains at 35%, remarkably lower than men's (63%). Moreover there are gaps between men and women which persist in various areas, such as, education, health, business and political affairs. Bhawana emphasized the importance of empowering women, which she believes, is also essential for the nation's development.

At the English Speaking Society of Kitakyushu City High

School that she visited, members held an English speech contest on the theme of Nepal.

Ms. Upadhyay seemed to be particularly impressed by one student's speech about Hindu deities. At the municipal Ayamegaoka Elementary School, she introduced Nepali dances and a game called *kabaddi*.



▲At Ayamegaoka Elementary School

Ms. Upadhyay also participated as a panelist in the KFAW World Report Seminar. The seminar focused on gender-based expressions in three Asian languages. Her time in Kitakyushu was truly rewarding both for Ms. Upadhyay and the residents of Kitakyushu.



▲Visiting the Council of Women's Groups of Kokura-Minami Ward

* For further information on the KFAW World Report Seminar and recipes of Nepali dishes, please visit the following website: <http://www.kfaw.or.jp>

Ceremony Commemorating the 15th Anniversary of UNIFEM Kitakyushu

■ UNIFEM and UNIFEM Kitakyushu

UNIFEM (United Nations Development Fund for Women) provides funding and technology to organizations/projects in developing countries that support women in order to improve their living standards and gain economic independence.

In Japan, the National Committee for UNIFEM, Japan and eight regional committees have been established to support UNIFEM's activities.

As UNIFEM Kitakyushu was established in 1994 as a regional committee, this year marks its 15th anniversary. Currently, it has some 300 members, all committed to fundraising through charity bazaars and various other events. The funds raised are sent to UNIFEM Headquarters through the Japanese Committee.

The Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women (KFAW) played a leading role in establishing the National Committee for UNIFEM, Japan. At present, the secretariat of UNIFEM kitakyushu is located within KFAW.

■ Ceremony Commemorating the 15th Anniversary

At the commemorative ceremony of the 15th anniversary of UNIFEM Kitakyushu on July 14, 2009, Ms. Sakiko FUJIOKA, president of UNIFEM Kitakyushu, gave the opening address. At that time, she introduced remarks by actress and former UNIFEM Goodwill Ambassador Julie Andrews: "By helping 400,000 women, you can help 1 million children." To support economic and social development of women in developing countries, Ms. Fujioka encouraged Japanese women to combine their efforts.

Following the opening address, Ms. Makiko ARIMA, president of the National Committee for UNIFEM, Japan, offered a commemorative lecture titled "Invigorate Society with Women's Power: The Goals of UNIFEM." After explaining the historical background of UNIFEM's establishment in 1976, she emphasized the vital importance of continuing UNIFEM's efforts towards eradicating violence against women as well as supporting women in developing countries to help them gain economic independence.

The lecture was followed by a report on programs to support women in Nepal and Bangladesh. These programs were financed by the Masumoto Minae Fund, established at the bequest of the late Ms. Minae MASUMOTO, who contributed greatly to founding and developing the National Committee for UNIFEM, Japan.



▲Ms. ARIMA, president of UNIFEM JAPAN

After the ceremony, the audience enjoyed a film and performances. The anime film shown was *Tsumiki no Ie* [The House of Small Cubes], which won the Academy Award for Best Animated Short Film in 2009. Later, there were performances by the *Ai no Ichiza* Company, comprised of municipal office staff members.



▲The 15th Anniversary event, Kitakyushu, JAPAN

FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS' REPORT

The Daily Life: Clothing

The Saree Lifestyle

Satoko CHATERJEE (India)

Twelve years have passed since I first began living in West Bengal, India. During most of those years, I have been busy taking care of my children, doing housework and striving to fulfill my role at an NGO. I had been too busy to think of wearing a *saree*, which I considered to be elegant but unsuitable for easy movement. Instead, I dressed myself in then *salwar kameez* (a pair of loose pajama-like trousers, long tunic and a thin cloth called *dupatta* for women to cover their chest). Four years ago, however, I suddenly felt like wearing a *saree*. As you all know, a *saree*, which is commonly worn by Indian women, basically comprises a piece of long colorful cloth.

I thought it embarrassing that I was unable to wear a *saree* by myself despite having lived so long in India. I also thought that upon reaching my mid-40s I should learn a manner expected of full-fledged Indian women. Moreover, the majority of married women in West Bengal wear *sarees*. And the percentage of women wearing this elegant costume is much higher in West Bengal than in any other region in India. Consequently, I considered that to understand the psyche of Bengali women, I should first learn to wear their costumes.

Young unmarried women, especially college students, wear *salwar kameez*, though many have begun wearing jeans and T-shirts. After getting married, however, even such young women begin to wear *sarees*, the time-honored Indian costume with a history of several thousand years. Moreover, married women apply red powder called *sindoor* on their forehead (below where their hair parts), red and white bangles on both arms and metal

(Access other foreign correspondents' reports on a website: <http://www.kfaw.or.jp/about/19-report.html.en>)

(iron) bangles called *loha* on their left arm. These costume and accessories indicate that the women wearing them are married.

I have begun wearing a *saree* now whenever I go out, though I do not always wear other accessories for married women. Wearing the time-honored costume, I found that it is much more functional than I had thought. In a *saree* I can easily move my body. And a *saree* keeps the wearer cool in summer and warm in winter. A *saree* is also economical since anyone can long continue wearing the same *saree* regardless of changes in body shape. Moreover, the sense of being wrapped in a cloth is comfortable. This I believe might soothe the stress and stabilize women's psyches. Indian women appear to be relaxed and stress-free.

Since olden times, cotton *sarees* have been used in many diverse ways even after the end of their service life. Women have used the old cloth for wrapping blankets, producing hammocks for babies, and weaving still another cloth after ripping the old cloth. *Sarees* cut into pieces were also used as sanitary napkins. So, *sarees* are excellent from the viewpoint of ease of recycling.

Because of these advantages and the fact that *sarees* never go out of fashion, I believe that Bengali women will long maintain their tradition of wearing *sarees*.



▲One lady (right) wears a saree, the other (left) wears a salwar kameez

INFORMATION

Exchange Program with Students from Chelyabinsk State University in Russia

Chelyabinsk City, the capital city of Chelyabinsk State, located just east of the Ural Mountains, has a population of 1.09 million. Kitakyushu City has economic ties with Chelyabinsk City particularly in the area of iron/steel and environmental industries. Recently Kitakyushu YMCA received seven students from the Oriental Faculty, Chelyabinsk State University. During their stay in Kitakyushu, the students studied Japanese culture and society in Japanese.

Since one of KFAW's directors is from Kitakyushu YMCA, KFAW organized a meeting of its young staff members and the Russian students on August 6, 2009. At the meeting, participants discussed the progress of gender equality, views of marriage and stereotypical views on gender-based roles in Japan and Russia. For example, in the Global Gender Gap Index, Russia ranks 42nd, while Japan ranks 98th. According to

statistics, in Russia, whereas there are narrow gender gaps in the areas of employment and income, participation rates of women in political and economic activities are not sufficiently high. Moreover, Russians marry sooner than Japanese but have a higher divorce rate. Some students also mentioned that few Russian women stop working after marriage, yet in most cases, women take childcare leave rather than men.

As for the students' future plans, they all said they hope to work in Japan as interpreters, translators or other specialists. They also hope to act as bridges linking Japan and Russia in diverse areas including business and tourism.



▲Friendly talks in Japanese



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 Labour (the present Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare). 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.

