

A Proposal for Building a Gender Justice and Sustainable Society

from Round Table Discussion in Kitakyushu

Organized by Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women (KFAW)

February 9, 2002

These are the voices of local women activists on environmental protection and/or gender equality in Kyushu and Yamaguchi in Western Japan.

To build a gender justice and sustainable society we 18 participants of the Round Table Discussion organized by Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women (KFAW) on February 9 2002 in Kitakyushu Japan agreed to propose:

[Women's Participation in Decision-making]

To promote women in decision-making bodies at local and national levels:

- To legislate for obligating political parties to put women and men alternately on a campaign lists for national elections and introducing a quota system for local assemblies
- To obligate each local government to formulate a plan for gender-equal community
- To place women, who are sensitive to gender and environment, at managerial positions in public and private sectors

[Setting Conditions to Enable Women's Participation in Decision-making]

To promote equal participation of women and men in making decisions and activities on environmental issues:

- To ensure fair sharing of domestic burdens and responsibilities between women and men including household chores and care for children and the elderly
- To restructure existing Japanese social security schemes; such as, tax and pension, from family-based to individual-based ones to eliminate gender inequality
- To eliminate gender-based discrimination in employment including recruitment, promotion and wage and establish a social support systems for care for children and the elderly

[Promotion of Gender Equality in Environmental Activities]

- To make it conditional to establish gender equality plans and to report its achievement for local governments upon receiving subsidies from the national government and for environmental NGOs upon getting financial supports from governments
- To encourage with the full participation of citizens; especially women, governments and enterprises to obtain ISO certification and also encourage each school and household to set their own environmental standards as a way to express their concern over environment
- To develop a new economic system, in which women can economically empower themselves by valuing women's significant roles to preserve natural resources and biodiversity and eliminating women's unpaid and under-paid work
- To develop and promote with participation of women renewable energies and alternative energies to reduce environmental burdens and health risks
- To ensure the voices of vulnerable people, especially women, whose livelihood depends on the use of natural resources, in development and to stop destroying ecosystems and put importance on the richness of biodiversity

[Environment Related Information Access, Science and Health Education]

- To secure for both women and men equal access to information on scientific and advanced technologies, including those of waste management and genetically modified organs
- To promote science and technology education for women to increase their capacity needed to contribute to building a sustainable society
- To conduct surveys on the impact of environmental destruction, including chemical or radioactive substances, on human health by focusing on sex difference, to make the results public and to take necessary measures

[Valuing Women's Knowledge and Technology and Integrating into Environmental Education]

- To integrate women into educational systems for future generations by valuing wisdom, knowledge, techniques and experiences concerning natural resources management inherited by women over generations
- To introduce a traditional Japanese diet into the school lunch systems and promote holistic education on food and agriculture from the viewpoint of the life cycle

[Increase in Community's Autonomy]

- To increase the autonomy of communities though promoting the consumption of local products, based on visible relationships between urban and rural communities as well as between producers and consumers as a means to tackle with the profit-oriented globalization, which accelerates gender inequality, poverty and environmental destruction
- To allow each community to set-up its own food safety standards and food security system based on the principle of gender equal citizen's participation in decision-making

[Partnership with Citizens and Nurturing Human Resources]

- To appreciate the role of citizens, especially women, in uniting a community and support their activities as an equal partner to the government
- To nurture gender sensitive human resources and integrate gender perspectives into community and urban development

[Human Rights]

- To guarantee human rights; especially women's reproductive health/rights, as a base in solving environmental and developmental issues
- To prioritize HIV/AIDS issues as they are closely related to poverty and human rights
- To stop the feminization of poverty, commercialization of women and their sexuality, child prostitution, and child labor promoted by the globalization of economy

[Global Warming, Unsustainable Production and Consumption]

- To make gender equal participation a fundamental rule in the efforts to curve global warming and an unsustainable pattern of production and consumption as they exacerbate the livelihood of deprived people
- To ensure not reinforce gender stereotypes division of labor

[Funds for Sustainable Development]

- To put the benefits of poor women in developing countries and indigenous people at the center of planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating Official Development Assistance (ODA) in view of their marginalization in the process of globalization of economy
- To make it an obligation to take actions to redress the adverse impacts of ODA
- To make public all information concerning ODA.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

(February 9, 2002 in Kitakyushu City)

- ARAKI, Hitomi (Secretary General, Citizen's Association to Think about Life and Waste/ Save the Kawabe River, Kumamoto Prefecture)
- FUJII, Ikuko (Member of the Tamagawa Town Councilor, Yamaguchi Prefecture)
- HARAGA, Izumi (Volunteer for "Environmental Museum" / Chair, Kitakyushu Grassroots Activities Society, Kitakyushu)
- HIRATA, Toshiko (President, F CO-OP, Fukuoka/ Professor, Kyushu Women's Junior College)
- INOUE, Mitsuko (Officer, JA Kitakyu Toubu, Kitakyushu)
- KAWAKITA, Yoko (Network for Anti- Nuclear Power Generation/ Member of the Yanai City Council, Yamaguchi Prefecture)
- KAWAGUCHI, Michiko (Chief of Trustees, NPO Hakata Yumematsubara - Kai, Fukuoka)
- KOSHIBA, Hisako (Secretary General, Japan Accountability Caucus Beijing, Yamaguchi/ Chair, Yamaguchi Support Network for Women, Yamaguchi Prefecture)
- KUBO, Yukie (Chair, Kitakyushu Association of Dietary Improvement Volunteers, Kitakyushu)
- MAEDA, Chikako (Member of Executive Committee, Mottainai Soken Forum, Kitakyushu)
- MISUMI, Yoshiko (President, Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women, Kitakyushu) * <Facilitator>
- MORIYAMA, Masako (Chair, Kitakyushu Women's Network for Consumer Issues, Kitakyushu)
- MOURI, Akiko (Adviser, Tobata Associated Women's Society, Kitakyushu)
- NISHIZUMI, Sachiyo (Chairperson, Kokuraminami Branch Committee, Green Co-op Fukuoka & Kitakyushu, Kitakyushu)
- ODA, Yukiko (Senior Researcher, Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women, Kitakyushu)
- ORI, Arisa (Minamata Disease Center Soshisha, Kumamoto Prefecture)
- SHINOZAKI, Masami (Chair, Chikugo-River Nature Watch, Fukuoka Prefecture)
- TERASHIMA, Yu (Co - chairs, Jubilee Kyushu on World Debt and Poverty, Fukuoka Prefecture)

Information & Background

Q1: What is the Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women?

Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women (KFAW) is an organization based in Kitakyushu City, western Japan, established in 1990. KFAW aims to improve women's status in Asia through various activities; conducting research, organizing conferences and seminars, implementing trainings, organizing study tours as well as documenting and publishing information on women in Asia, including Japan. KFAW's motto is mutuality; namely, learning, touching and helping each other.

The uniqueness of KFAW is its strong foothold in the local community, Kitakyushu and among women's groups in Japan. The major groups of KFAW's Board of Directors are the representatives of CBOs and women's groups.

Environment has been one of the major areas of activities for KFAW because of the historical women's environmental movement called "We want a Blue Sky", which fought against industrial pollution in the 1960s and 1970s in Kitakyushu City. Those women of the movement were the major driving force for the establishment of KFAW. Thus, since its start, KFAW has worked to make women's voice visible and to mainstream gender perspectives in environmental activities at the local, national and international levels.

Please visit <http://www.kfaw.or.jp> or e-mail: kfaw@kfaw.or.jp

Q2: Why did KFAW organize the roundtable discussion?

To organize roundtable discussions was one of KFAW's contributions to the WSSD (World Summit for Sustainable Development) processes to be held in Johannesburg in August 2002. After participating in the regional preparatory process for the WSSD held in Beijing and Phnom Penh in July and November 2001 respectively, KFAW realized the necessity of inputting concerted voices on environment from gender perspectives, especially from Japan. It was also revealed that the necessity for mainstreaming gender perspectives in environmental policies is not widely recognized and the commitment of women's groups for the WSSD processes is not strong.

KFAW called upon environmental activists; especially, women, and women's groups to have round table discussions on WSSD and related issues in Kitakyushu and Tokyo on February 9 and 17, 2002 respectively to increase their mutual understanding and to raise their concerns for the WSSD. The invitation was well received and participants of the two round table discussions had active dialogues from a wide range of viewpoints.

Q3: Who are the participants of the roundtable meetings?

The participants of Kitakyushu were 18 in total from Kitakyushu city and adjacent prefectures. Their backgrounds as well as areas of interest were diverse, although all of them are very active in various environmental issues in each local community on urban or rural levels. Some of them are the members of local councils who were elected based on their environmental activities: others are representatives of consumer cooperatives and agricultural cooperatives, and environmental educators. The areas of interests and actions vary from anti-industrial pollution, nuclear energy, dam construction, waste management, safe food, health, international cooperation on tree planting, environmental education and campaigning for debt cancellation.