

22nd Kitakyushu Conference on Asian Women

On November 26 and 27, the Kitakyushu Conference on Asian Women was held at the Kitakyushu Municipal Gender Equality Center MOVE.

For details, please visit <http://www.kfaw.or.jp/report/index.html.en>

Facing Natural Disasters

- What We Should Learn from the Great East Japan Earthquake

On the first day, the 26th, a keynote lecture and a panel discussion were held with the theme “Facing Natural Disasters - What We Should Learn from the Great East Japan Earthquake,” inviting people engaged in reconstruction and restoration support efforts to deliver the lecture and act as panelists. The panel discussion, with a panelist invited also from Korea, featured the Great East Japan Earthquake including the necessity of a gender-equal perspective for disaster damage prevention measures as well as reconstruction and restoration efforts. Finally, what we can and should do now was examined.

◆Keynote lecture: “Disasters and Gender Equality” Reiko AOKI (Executive Director of the National Council of Women’s Centers, NPO)

From the perspective of gender equality, Ms. Aoki spoke about the importance of appropriate responses and support at the time of disasters and about the need for a proper disaster damage prevention plan, sharing concrete examples from the Great East Japan Earthquake.

One of the most impressive support measures offered by her organization was establishment of the website “Disasters and Women Centers.” The website enabled women’s centers nationwide to exchange and share information, leading to the provision of support that was really needed in affected areas. When the operation of evacuation centers was male-oriented, the website was effective in helping to answer women’s needs that tended to be overlooked. Ms. Aoki indicated the necessity of “match-making” between demands which women hesitate to express clearly and actual support; specifically, the provision of space and consultation services only for women as well as the delivery of cosmetics and other daily necessities.

Focusing on the “6.11 Symposium – Disaster/Reconstruction and Gender Equality” held in Tokyo, Ms. Aoki also referred to how the symposium’s executive committee promoted reconstruction efforts after the symposium. She clearly explained how the committee urged the central government to ensure that gender-equality was incorporated in its disaster reconstruction measures. Her explanation was truly significant.



▲Keynote lecture by Ms. Aoki

◆Panel discussion

< Panelists >

- Reiko AOKI (Executive Director, National Council of Women’s Centers, NPO)
- Kyong-Ja MIN (President, Chungcheongnam-Do Women’s Policy Development Institute, Korea)
- Yasuko ARAI (Subsection Chief, General Affairs & Planning, Sendai Gender Equal Opportunity Foundation)
- Kenichiro OGAWA (General Secretary, Kitakyushu YMCA)

< Coordinator >

- Kuniko YOSHIZAKI (President, Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women)

At the panel discussion, each panelist made a presentation, followed by a free discussion.

First, Ms. Min, from Korea, spoke about her country’s responses to earthquakes, as well as the Korean people’s response to and support given in the aftermath of the Great East Japan Earthquake. While Korea has never experienced a large-scale earthquake, in recent years the country has been hit more and more frequently by earthquakes with a seismic intensity scale of under 4. Nevertheless, according to Ms. Min, the country’s disaster damage prevention measures are not sufficient.

Next, Ms. Arai, who was engaged in women-friendly support in Sendai, which was hard hit by the disaster, spoke about the actual situation and challenges of the area’s support efforts. She presented the details of a laundry service offered by a non-profit organization in Sendai. One of the most impressive messages in her presentation was that, when providing support, her organization always paid attention to what should be done to help affected women return to their normal lives and regain a positive attitude.

Finally, Mr. Ogawa, who served as part of the operations staff of a volunteer center in Sendai City, gave a concrete and easy-to-understand presentation on a support activity provided by his organization. The organization invited children who evacuated to a Kitakyushu City camp.

The panel discussion concluded with an exchange of opinions between Ms. Yoshizaki, the coordinator and all the panelists on significant gender-related problems observed after the disaster, including those related to employment and domestic violence against women. Some reports said that women tended to experience greater disadvantage than men at the time of



▲Panelists

natural disasters. There is no denying that this is due to the low participation of women in the decision-making process, which makes it difficult to reflect women's opinions. In this regard, it was confirmed once again that it was necessary to feature the concept of gender equality even in normal times. The program came to an end with the suggestion that in order to minimize possible disaster damage, it is necessary for everyone to work together on the problem.

Reports on KFAW Research Activities

The Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women (KFAW) conducts surveys and research on a wide variety of gender and women related problems across the world, especially in the Asia and the Pacific region. At the report session held on the second day, November 27, of the Kitakyushu Conference on Asian Women, Chief Researcher Masami Shinozaki and Senior Researcher Masako Ota gave presentations on their research and exchanged opinions with forum participants.

“A Comparative Research on Effective Policies and Measures to Raise the TFR in Japan and Korea – An Interim Report”
Masami SHINOZAKI, Chief Researcher, KFAW

The TFR in Japan and Korea dropped historically low. And the female labor involvement rate in the two countries continues to show the M letter type, which is different from other OECD countries. Various policies and measures have been carried out considering these rates over two decades.



This research aims to examine the effectiveness of these policies and measures at the local government's level: prefectures, cities, townships and villages. In this interim report, Professor Bae discussed the birth rate and policies changes in Korea. Ms. Shinozaki then explained the methodological framework, and introduced the unique case of Iidate village, Fukushima, whose TFR was 1.8 during past several years. She also referred to Edogawa-ku, Tokyo and Shimane prefecture.

“Women's Empowerment through Collective Actions: The Case of Mukhtar Federation in Andhra Pradesh, India”
Masako OTA, Senior Researcher, KFAW

The results of research on the Mahila Samakhya Programme was reported based on fieldwork in India. The programme aims to empower women through education by adopting a problem-solving approach.



Women are organized into groups which try to remove obstacles to the promotion of female education. Thus, women and girls are enabled to avail themselves of educational opportunities.

The Makthal federation was established to solve common problems across the villages, such as child marriage and child labor. It is promoting education, redressing gender discrimination, and sending representatives to *panchayat* (self-government in villages). Also, it is now conducting projects independently from the original programme.

Concerning projects for women's empowerment, it is important to incorporate a strategy which enables women to acquire abilities and take action to change society, rather than merely providing services.

Reports on KFAW /CWPDJ Joint Research

(4th Japan-Korea Seminar “Comparison between Japan and Korea in Child-Rearing Support Networks”)

In August 2011, KFAW visited the Chungcheongnam-Do Women's Policy Development Institute (CWPDJ) to meet CWPDJ's new president Kyong-Ja Min, who assumed the position in 2010. It was confirmed at the meeting that both organizations will further engage in mutual cooperation. On the second day of the Kitakyushu Conference on Asian Women, reports on a KFAW and CWPDJ joint research project were presented for the first time in the three-year history of relations between the two organizations. Also KFAW and CWPDJ researchers explained their respective research.

The research provided a comparison between Japan and Korea in terms of each country's actual situation regarding social support networks for working women with young children to help raise their children, and how the networks for such women influenced their decision to continue to work.

It was reported that while a so-called “M-shaped curve” was observed in female labor force participation in both countries, there were differences in their working attitudes and practices in terms of social support networks. One of the most concrete and impressive examples was that working women in Korea were more satisfied with their working situation than those in Japan, and they highly valued their husbands, who provided support for their careers.

Report① “Personal network to help married women work – based on surveys in Fukuoka Prefecture (Kitakyushu City and Fukuoka City) and Korea (Chungcheongnam-Do)”
Katsuhiko ISHIKAWA, enrolled in a doctoral program of the Graduate School of Human-Environment Studies, Kyushu University (FY 2010 KFAW Research Staff)

Report② “Surveys on the actual situation of child-rearing support networks and working attitudes – with the focus on a comparison between Korea and Japan”
Eun Hee CHOE, researcher of the Chungcheongnam-Do Women's Policy Development Institute, Korea

