

Women Today

Redefining Gender Equality

Since my earliest childhood, I have read an endless amount of books on women's rights, women's liberation and the empowerment of women. I have walked the streets shouting out to whoever could be bothered to listen to me that women must be free and that men have been discriminating women since the dawn of time. And then I became the mother of two sons! My two sons taught me that life is not black and white and that both women and men are caught up in a straightjacket called gender.

Scandinavia is often called the most gender equal region in the world. And much has been achieved. Through political drivers like the women's movement and economical drivers like the demand for women's participation in the labour market, women have the same legal rights as men in Denmark today. Women and men contribute to the economy on an equal footing. Women are better educated than men and women are economically independent from their spouses. In fact, it is generally recognized that women's contributions to society are as important as men's. In other words, gender equality is deemed a prerequisite for economic growth and prosperity. On top of that, Denmark has been appointed the happiest nation in the world. This mainly stems from the fact that there is a strong sense of coherence in society as well as a broad feeling of justice. Both women and men feel that they can achieve what they desire and be judged on individual competence rather than gender.

Like most countries in the world, however, we still face gender related problems like; violence in the family, gender gaps in decision making, the pay gap as well as gender segregation in education and in the labour market. Why is this so? Why haven't we achieved full equality yet? What is the root cause of these problems? I would like to argue that traditional gender roles are the main challenge for the achievement of gender equality globally. Let's use the educational system as an example. In the EU, girls and boys are brought up to believe that they are equal. However, culture does in fact determine which path they follow because girls are expected to perform better in humanitarian studies and boys better in the scientific disciplines. So while girls have better grades on average and often outnumber boys among new university graduates, many female students still tend to study subjects that lead to careers with lower pay and status. It also prevents boys and men from embracing curricula predominantly regarded as feminine. Thus, this trend simultaneously creates



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Ms. Kira APPEL

an under-representation of boys and men in the humanities. Consequently, the uneven distribution of women and men students across disciplines and academic curricula affect their future employability and choices. This segregation leads to a considerable lack of female talent in the mathematical based sciences, for instance, information and communication technology, and a shortage of men in caring sectors. Traditional gender related expectations hence function as an effective barrier for girls as well as boys in making full use of their competences and from living the lives they want.

When I walked the streets as a youngster I called out for women's empowerment, but today, I call out for equal rights for both women and men! I call out for the recognition of the fact that my sons must be acknowledged as competent fathers and care givers just as women must be acknowledged as competent decision makers. Gender equality is a gift for men too. For example, by sharing the care giving role between both parents through the fathers' use of paternity leave schemes, we achieve strong and happy marriages as well as strong father-children relationships. If both women and men are working, the responsibility of the family will be shared, and men will be relieved of the burden of being the main breadwinner.

Gender equality is a struggle for the benefit of both sexes. The women's rights movement will not succeed until we include men. In order to do so, we need to redefine and diversify the concepts of femininity and masculinity. Stereotypes of any kind are a straightjacket for women as well as for men. A truly equal society is a win-win situation for the individual as well as for society. Equality promotes justice, opportunities and happiness. And who doesn't want to be happy?

Ms. Kira APPEL

Master of Political Science, University of Copenhagen, 1996.

Since then, Appel has been employed by the Prime Minister's Office, Ministry for Urban Affairs and Gender Equality, Ministry for Social Affairs and Gender Equality, Ministry for Welfare, Ministry for Employment, Ministry for Climate Change and Gender Equality, Ministry for Gender Equality and Ecclesiastical Affairs, Ministry for Children, Gender Equality, Integration and Social Affairs, Ministry for Children, Education and Gender Equality. She is currently working for the Minister for Gender Equality.



Current Issues Series

Globalization of Gender Inequalities: Discussions from the Perspectives of Foreign Domestic Workers (Part 2)



Associate Professor, Graduate School of Social and Cultural Studies, Kyushu University

Ms. Reiko OGAWA

Prof. Reiko OGAWA assumed her current position after working in the field of international development in Southeast Asia. She served as a co-researcher at the National Museum of Ethnology and as a visiting researcher at the Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women. Her publications include *Social Issues and Policies in Asia: Family, Ageing and Work* (Co-authored, Cambridge Scholars Publishing)

According to the United Nations, 3% of the world's population are immigrants, among whom 48% are women. Many women who migrate have to leave their families behind to earn money to support their livelihood. However, the work available to migrant women from developing countries is limited and mostly concentrated in low-paid feminized jobs such as domestic work, child care and elderly care.

In Asia, to supplement women's entry into the labor market, increasing numbers of migrant women started to work in Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia and Taiwan, Province of China. In most cases, migrant domestic workers live-in at their employer's home and do cleaning, washing, shopping, cooking, child care and elderly care. They will also walk the dog, wash cars, take children to and from school, accompany the elderly on hospital visits and will even clean their employer's office and respond to whatever task is needed. The jobs of domestic workers are not specified, so work can be flexibly defined without limits.

Unlike factory work where the work is specified, domestic work takes place in the private sphere often without labor regulations and protection of privacy, thus becoming prone to abuse and violence. In some cases, women's passports are confiscated so that they will not run away, they cannot change their employers and are burdened with huge debt which they have to pay back after they start working. Considering these situations, some describe migrant domestic work as "modern day slavery." In Asia and the Pacific, there are 2.3 million domestic workers and the ILO Convention 189 calls for decent work for domestic workers realizing the fundamental principles and rights at work.

In Japan, the 'Japan Revitalization Strategy' (Revised 2014) proposed the promotion of foreign personnel in order to make Japanese women more active. One of the strategies is to introduce migrant domestic workers in designated National Strategic Special Zones, such as Kanagawa, Osaka and Tokyo. In Japan, these workers do not live-in but establish a three-year contract with a dispatching company and are sent to different households. Even though the arrangement is to live-out, considering the deterioration of the labor market conditions and human rights violations

affecting foreign trainees under the Technical Intern Training Program, similar issues can be anticipated to happen. Also, it is unclear how the cost for training and travel will be shouldered among different stake-holders.

Migrant domestic workers are supposed to receive the same amount of salary as Japanese but already some companies are negotiating to decrease the price in order to expand the market. This might be welcomed by the less well-off households which are in need of assistance. But we need to think about the larger context as the retrenchment of social expenditure and opening up the domestic/care labour market is happening simultaneously. In societies where there is no public policy to support child care or elderly care, the only solution is to privately employ migrant domestic/care workers who are cheap but not well-trained thus resulting in many accidents. If domestic/care work becomes a work of migrant workers, Japanese workers will shun this work and it will become not just gendered but racialised. Also, using the presence of migrant workers as a reason to reduce public services will exclude low-income households such as single mothers from the system. This neglects the role of the state as well as the men, and the women are forced into a conflicting position over domestic/care work.

If both men and women are to actively participate in society, an infrastructure to support domestic/care work is necessary. There are two ways to achieve this goal. One is to develop the public provisions for child and elderly care, amend the long working hours and share domestic/care work equally between women and men. The other is to maintain the long working hours and gendered division of labor at home and outsource domestic/care work to the market. The former aims towards more gender equality while the latter maintains gender inequality.

If there is no respect for the human rights of migrants, the migrants cannot provide quality care. We should aim for a society that is fair and just for both Japanese and foreigners alike by confirming the right to living standards stated in the Article 25 of the Japanese Constitution and the principle of gender equality and find a way to live together with our neighbors in Asia.

The 27th Kitakyushu Conference on Asian Women

Date & time: Saturday, November 26, 2016, 13:00 – 16:00
Venue: Kitakyushu Municipal Gender Equality Center MOVE, Large Seminar Room, 5th Floor

The conference was held under the theme: “No one will be left behind” – What Can We Do to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In the keynote speech, Ms. Yoko HAYASHI, Lawyer and the first Japanese Chairperson of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (the Committee), highlighted the role of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in order to achieve the SDGs.

Following the keynote speech, honorable guest, Ms. Kyoko HOKUGO, Director, Gender Mainstreaming Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, delivered speech on the efforts made by the Ministry.

At the panel discussion, how to accomplish the SDGs at the local and global level was discussed based on the presentations from Kitakyushu City, Asia and the global perspectives.

What are the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?



▶ Keynote Speech

Ms. Yoko HAYASHI

(Lawyer, Chairperson of the U.N. Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women)

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and Japan



The CEDAW, adopted by the U.N. General Assembly in 1979, is one of the nine major international agreements to protect human rights. They are: International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; Convention on the Rights of the Child; International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families; Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; and Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances.

Japan signed the CEDAW in 1980 in Copenhagen and ratified it in 1985. Although it has been more than 30 years since then, discrimination against women still persists even in the law. Actually, no country in the world has yet realized full gender equality both in terms of law and in reality, and Japan is no exception.

Recently, the Committee has recommended Japan to follow up two issues. One of the issues is amending the Civil Code, specifically revising articles on the requirement of having the same surnames for married couples; abolishing any waiting period for women to remarry upon divorce; and raising the legal minimum age of marriage for women to 18 years to be equal to that of men. The other issue is to prohibit sexist speech and propaganda advocating racial superiority or hatred against minority women and to establish an independent expert body to monitor them.

The Committee and the SDGs

The Committee together with the UN Women established the UN-Women/SDGs Working Group, which creates indicators with special focus on the Goal 5 “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”. The Working Group is currently discussing to generate indicators that

include the existence of a national human-rights organizations, the introduction of a quota system for women’s political participation, the establishment of laws to ensure equal pay for work of equal value, and the prohibition of so-called child marriage, i.e. marriage of children under 18.

No one will be left behind

“No one will be left behind” is the spirit of the SDGs. I think the spirit provides us a great opportunity to review and eliminate the gender-based discrimination, which is found even in the judicial fields in Japan. Although the recommendations to the Japanese Government by the Committee might not be sufficient to change the persistent gender inequality in Japan, the implementation of the SDGs is a good start to make a change.

Furthermore, the SDGs clearly demonstrated the interconnectivity of the three fundamental purposes of the UN; namely, respect for human rights, economic development, and peace and security. They are the international human-rights agreements, including the CEDAW. Regarding the implementation of the SDGs, a review process has already started and Japan will conduct the national voluntary review next year. Taking advantage of this opportunity, NGOs, NPOs, and women’s organizations should express their keen interest and actively participate in it.

▶ Honorable Guest

Ms. Kyoko HOKUGO

(Director, Gender Mainstreaming Division, Foreign Policy Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan)

The Japanese Government’s Efforts in Promoting the SDGs

Japan made active contributions to the establishment of SDGs by, for example, leading international dialogue opportunities even before discussions began at the UN. In the days of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Japan was in a position of providing supports for other countries. The SDGs, however, have to cover domestic issues and the Government of Japan has established a Cabinet body, the SDGs Promotion Headquarters, headed by the Prime Minister and composed of all ministers on May 20, 2016, in order to ensure a whole-of-government approach to implementing the 2030 Agenda in a comprehensive and effective manner. Presently, the Headquarters is drafting the Implementation

Guiding Principles. The Guiding Principles covers eight priority areas, including empowerment of All People.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ Efforts in Promoting Women’s Active Participation in Society

There are several key policies to promote gender equality in Japan. They are the “Plan for Promoting Dynamic Engagement of All Citizens,” the “Fourth Basic Plan for Gender Equality,” and the “Act on Promotion of Women’s Participation and Advancement in the Workplace”.

One of the measures undertaken by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to promote gender equality and women’s active participation in society was seen at the “G7 Japan 2016 Ise-Shima Summit.” As the Presidency, Japan led the discussion on the implementation of the SDGs and showed its commitment to the “G7 Guiding Principles for Capacity Building of Women and Girls,” in which promoting women’s capacity in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) careers and fostering female leadership in mediation, peacebuilding, preventing conflicts and creating a safe and peaceful society were emphasized. Japan succeeded to generate these concrete results.

In addition, we will organize the third World Assembly for Women (WAW)! in December this year. This conference will serve as a platform for the discussion to realize a society in which women shine and can demonstrate their capacities to the fullest extent possible.

▶ Panel Discussion

<Panelists>

- **Ms. Yoko HAYASHI**

(Lawyer and Chairperson of the U.N. Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women)

- **Ms. Kyoko HOKUGO**

(Director, Gender Mainstreaming Division, Foreign Policy Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan)

- **Ms. Koh MIYAOI**

(Gender Advisor for Asia and the Pacific, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP))

- **Mr. Tomohide NAKAMURA**

(Assistant Manager, Central Children’s Counseling & Guidance Center, Child and Domestic Affairs Bureau, Kitakyushu City)

<Coordinator>

- **Mitsuko HORIUCHI**

(President, Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women (KFAW))

▶ Panelist Presentation 1

Ms. Koh MIYAOI

(Gender Advisor for Asia and the Pacific, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP))

The SDGs and Gender Equality: UNDP’s Approach

“Sustainable Development,” “Democratic Governance and Peace Building and Resilience-building,” are the three priority areas in the UNDP’s Strategic Plan.

The SDGs are closely connected with these three areas. Although the SDGs consist of 17 goals, what we need to do is not to tackle each of the goals separately, but to take an approach that embraces multiple goals inclusively. The SDGs require us to make fundamental changes in our approaches.

At present, the UNDP provides support for the compilation of existing data because a wide variety of data is necessary in order to achieve the SDGs.

The data is useful not only for monitoring, but also for identifying those who are or likely to be left behind, as well as for presenting the effectiveness of solutions with numerical figures. An important point is that policies should be formulated based on such collected data.

The UNDP served as the leader during the days of the MDGs. In the present days of the SDGs, however, we recognized the cooperation among various UN organizations is essential. We also found attitudinal and behavioral changes are indispensable for transforming the world for the achievement of SDGs.

▶ Panelist Presentation 2

Mr. Tomohide NAKAMURA

(Assistant Manager, Central Children’s Counseling & Guidance Center, Child and Domestic Affairs Bureau, Kitakyushu City)

Sustainable Development and Approach to Poverty and Abuse of Children and Women

Children suffering abuse or poverty are losing their experience, human relationships, sense of self-esteem, etc. A lack of self-esteem is what we think most serious problem. When children suffer violence from their parents, whose love they need the most, the sense of acceptance of themselves as they are, is completely shattered.

We provide two pillars of support: ensuring space and providing study support. We strive to prevent them from isolation by freeing them from abusive relationships and helping to reestablish human relationships with the involvement of their school, community, and so on.

When providing study support, we work closely not only with the public sector, but also with non-profit organizations. I believe that a guidance, such as support for passing entrance examinations for high school, is especially necessary to prevent the reoccurrence of poverty and abuse.

I feel that condemning abusive parents is inadequate. What is necessary is to provide support to both parents and their children and to continue such support from a multi-angle perspective over an extended period of time.

Mothers are often seen as abusers. However, they are not the only one who to be blamed. The fundamental problem is that the parenting responsibilities are often concentrated solely to mother and fathers may leave the family without taking responsibility for their children. Considering this unfair share of family responsibilities, I think that support for mothers is necessary.

Although poverty and abuse are invisible in Japan, it is important not to leave any one behind. If you notice any child who may needs attention, please do not hesitate to contact us. As there are some cases that show improvement through the multi-sectoral collaboration, I will continue working tenaciously to eliminate poverty and child abuse.



At the panel discussion

Developing Overseas Network – Hanoi Study Tour 2016

We held the Hanoi Study Tour 2016, which drew 11 female participants, including representatives from women's organizations in Kitakyushu City.

KFAW strives to establish a permanent network involving overseas gender-related organizations and other bodies, in order to foster understanding of gender issues in Asia and the rest of the world. As part of this effort, since 2013, we have been interacting with the Hanoi Women's Union. Thanks to cooperation from the Union, we held the study tour and participants visited the Union, a childcare center, and ordinary families. They mainly learned about the daily lives of Vietnamese people, who divided their roles in their large families when taking care of their children and senior members.

Main Schedule

- September 6 (Tue.) Visit to the Vietnamese Women's Museum
- September 7 (Wed.) Visit to a childcare center
Visit to the Hanoi Women's Union
- September 8 (Thu.) Sightseeing in Hanoi
Visit to ordinary families
- September 9 (Fri.) Visit to the TOTO Vietnam Plant

Vietnamese Women's Museum Learning about the History of Vietnamese Women

Established in 1987 by the Vietnam Women's Union, the Vietnamese Women's Museum features women as its main theme. The facility displays exhibitions in the following three fields: Women in Family, Women in History, and Women's Fashion.

Vietnam is home to a total of 54 ethnic groups, namely the Kinh people and 53 ethnic minorities, each of which boasts its own language and culture. Even today, these minority groups speak both their own languages and Vietnamese as the common language. In the countryside, there still remain cultures and practices distinctive to each ethnic minority. We visited the museum and observed tools and other items that indicated the energy of the daily lives of the Vietnamese, such as flamboyant ceremonial costumes, and colanders for storing rice. Of particular note were exhibits detailing the fact that during the wars of the past, women had significantly contributed to ensuring materials and funding, and had played an active role at the front line of guerilla warfare. Although the museum focused on women, we learned a great deal about Vietnamese culture and history in general.

Childcare Center Learning about Childcare in Vietnam

We visited Son Ka Childcare Center. After viewing a welcome dance performance by many children and childcare workers, we observed different classes. Children in a class for five- and six-year-olds were making rice cakes as offerings to the mid-autumn full moon, while those in a class for three- and four-year-olds were playing a game involving moving their legs, and those in a class for two- and



Collective photograph taken at the childcare center

three-year-olds were enjoying hand play in the hallway together with childcare workers.

Established in 2003, Son Ka Childcare Center is a national institute with 60 childcare workers and 670 children aged from two to six. The facility is similar to a certified childcare center in Japan. The children of the facility are divided into three categories (two- and three-year-olds, three- and four-year-olds, and five- and six-year-olds). Consisting of 70 children, each class is handled by four childcare workers. The facility is open to all children living in eligible areas; there are no restrictions as to enrollment, such as their parents' working conditions. Many of the staff members working at the facility are young, and have two qualifications: childcare worker and kindergarten teacher. The qualification system of Vietnam is almost the same as that of Japan.

We were impressed that 70 children in a class were getting along well together in the same room without any conflict, even when hitting one another on the hand or the leg. It seems that if brought up in large families, children get used to living with others, leading them to become gentler towards other children.

The Hanoi Women's Union Exchanging Information with the Hanoi Women's Union

Since 2013, the KFAW has been interacting with the Hanoi Women's Union. Last year, three executive members from the Union visited Japan to promote mutual understanding with the KFAW by exchanging information with women's organizations based in Kitakyushu City and visiting various places in the city.

This year, we visited the Hanoi Women's Union, and were welcomed by President Nguyen Thi Thu Ha of the Union, who said "Our visit to Kitakyushu City last year served as a good opportunity for us to interact with women in Japan and to learn about various aspects of Japan. It is our great pleasure to have such an interaction, which helps both of us understand each other's lifestyles. We hope that our interaction will lead to the development of women in both countries." We asked questions from a woman's perspective regarding Vietnamese families and lifestyles, which enabled us to learn about the working styles of Vietnamese women and the country's child-care leave system.



Exchanging information with members of the Hanoi Women's Union

Vietnamese Households Learning about the Daily Lives of People in Vietnam

We co-organized a program to learn about Vietnamese families and lifestyles with the Hanoi Women's Union. Divided into three groups, we visited three ordinary families living in the Hoan Kiem District in the Old Quarter, the downtown area of Hanoi City.

Family A

Consisting of Nine Members in Four Generations

Boasting a history of 80 years over six generations, Family A has their own precepts of "Make Our Large Family Happy" and "Treasure Our Children and Grandchildren." These precepts are written and displayed in one of their rooms. Mr. and Mrs. A used to work as a painter and a civil servant respectively, and now both of them live off their pensions. Mr. A takes their nine-year-old granddaughter to school and also picks her up. All of the family members do what they can do to help out, and such a division of roles seems to be the key to their happy lives.



Visit to Family A

Family B

Consisting of Eight Members in Four generations

Family B purchases food ingredients at a market every day only in the necessary quantity. This is typical in Hanoi, but according to them, an increasing number of families today shop at large supermarkets and store the food they buy.

Family B taught us the four virtues for Vietnamese women to follow in order to become what they should be: 1) work hard; 2) maintain their beauty; 3) speak politely; and 4) protect morals and act fairly. These virtues suggest how hard Vietnamese women work for their families, including their commitment to household chores and contribution to the family budget.



Visit to Family B

Family C

Consisting of Eight Members in Four generations, plus One Housemaid

In Family C, all eight family members have breakfast

and dinner together. The family employs one maid, who does the household chores and takes care of the oldest member of the household, a 90-year-old great-grandmother with weak legs.

Mr. C said that the important thing for people was to increase the size of their families. He continued that even if assets were increased, they were not valuable, and family ties were the most precious treasure. In the center of the wall in one of the rooms there was a large photograph of his 66 relatives who had gathered to celebrate the lunar New Year. Mr. C's mother was the center of the photograph. He proudly showed the photograph to us.

In addition, Mr. C truly treasured his mother and ancestors. He said that as the oldest son, he took it for granted that he took care of his mother and paid his respects to his ancestors, and that this attitude would be handed down to his son. His remarks gave a glimpse of the extent to which Vietnamese people treasured their families.



Visit to Family C

While receiving warm hospitality at these Vietnamese families, we asked about household chores, enabling us to learn about the division of roles for household chores in



On a street in the Old Quarter

the large families and about cooperation in their daily lives. Thanks to this cooperation, Vietnamese women can work outside the home without any worries. Also, since all family members, including the grandparents, are committed to looking after the children, both parents can work outside the home without any worries.

In terms of eating habits, it is common to eat breakfast outside, as a family at a stall or in a small restaurant. This is a good example of efficiently saving time for household chores before leaving for work.

Even in the Old Quarter, the downtown area of Hanoi City, there are many women peddling goods in conical hats called *non la*, or managing small shops in front of houses. Some of us said that the view was similar to the one frequently observed in Japan during the decade from 1955. As indicated by the average age of Vietnamese being 27, there are many young people in Vietnam, a country currently enjoying rapid economic growth. In this country, we directly observed the powerful energy of women working here and there in the streets. This interaction project served as a good opportunity to learn about the Vietnamese people's attitude towards their families, which has been handed down from generation to generation, as well as about the Vietnamese lifestyle and culture.

Sendai Study Tour 2016

From Wednesday, December 14 to Friday, December 16, 2016, KFAW held a Study Tour to Sendai. In this tour, 15 persons including citizens and government officials engaged in community development and disaster risk reduction in Kitakyushu City, visited Sendai City in order to learn about the disaster-stricken city's experiences from the perspective of gender equality. In addition, we held a follow-up study and report session in order to ensure that the experiences obtained through the study tour are reflected in a wide variety of community efforts.

Main Schedule

- December 14 (Wed.)** Visit to L-Park Sendai (Lectures from Mr. Konno in Katahira, and Ms. Kato, Director of L-Park Sendai)
- December 15 (Thu.)** Visit to Iwakiri (Lectures from Ms. Kanno) Visit to Tagonishi (Lectures from Mr. Sato) Visit to disaster-related facilities (Fukudamachi-Minami 1-Chome Park (Temporary Housing, Home-for-All), the Sendai 3/11 Memorial Community Center, the damaged Arahama Elementary School building, sea embankment (from the window), the Commemorative Monument of Nakano District, Hiyoriyama) Visit to Kirin Beer Sendai Plant (Lectures from Mr. Yoshida, Manager, and plant tour)
- December 16 (Fri.)** Visit to L-Sola Sendai (Lectures from Ms. Munakata, Representative Director of NPO Equal Net Sendai, and lectures from Mr. Takahashi, Director of Disaster-Resilient and Environmentally-Friendly City Promotion Office, Sendai City)



On Hiyoriyama

In this tour, we learned about the experiences of local residents and staff working for an NPO, the city government, and a company. All of them are currently engaged in disaster risk prevention, reduction and restoration in Sendai City. To learn about community efforts to prevent and reduce disaster risks and to be implemented at the time of a disaster, we first listened to the following three people: Mr. Hitoshi KONNO in Katahira, a typical urban disaster area with many stranded commuters and foreign victims at the time of the Great East Japan Earthquake; Ms. Sumie KANNO, who had formulated the Disaster Risk Reduction Declaration for Women in Iwakiri together with her friends before the disaster, and is currently playing an active role as a leader of Community Disaster Risk Reduction Efforts in Sendai City; and Mr. Masanobu SATO, who had lived in Nakano which had been severely damaged by the tsunami, and was forced to stay in an evacuation center and then in a temporary house for a long time after the disaster, and who is currently engaged in new community development while living in a restoration support house. Through the lectures from the three, we learned that although each community had its own characteristics, leadership and community ties were truly needed at the time of the disaster. There is nothing you can do in an emergency if you cannot do it at an ordinary time. All three are aware of the wide variety of problems at all times, and greatly value the ties with their fellow community members. We feel that this is why they were able to act positively even in the face of many difficulties.

Moreover, to learn about the perspective of gender equality in terms of community efforts to be made to reduce disaster risks and to be implemented at the time of a disaster, we also listened to Director Shioko KATO of L-Park Sendai and Representative Director Emiko MUNAKATA of the NPO Equal Net Sendai. Both of them provided active support for women at the time of the Great East Japan Earthquake. They said that it was important for women to participate in the decision-making process in order to identify a wide

variety of community needs when operating an evacuation center. Currently, they are dedicated to fostering female leaders who can listen to a wide variety of people and demonstrate leadership.

We finally listened to a staff of the Kirin Beer Sendai Plant and Disaster-Resilient and Environmentally-Friendly City Promotion Office of Sendai City about what they had done at the time of the disaster, what their situation had been like in those days, and what they were currently doing to assist restoration efforts.

It is said that citizens of Kitakyushu, a city less prone to earthquakes, are not sufficiently aware of such disasters. We, however, need to protect our lives on our own. The study tour made us keenly realize that we needed to push forward with community development based on lessons from the experiences of the affected areas, in order to protect ourselves and our beloved ones from disasters that could occur in the future. We also visited disaster memorial facilities to pray for the repose of the souls of the victims, and felt once again that we must never forget the Great East Japan Earthquake.

Feedback from Participants

- Visiting the areas stricken by the Great East Japan Earthquake and listening to many residents affected by the disaster made me recognize anew that we should never forget about this catastrophe. At the same time, I strongly felt that we need to put this experience to full use in Kitakyushu.
- I could sense the firm determination of people in Sendai to protect their lives on their own.
- Among the lessons I learned from this study tour, I would like to put in practice what are readily applicable to my daily life.
- I would like to make an opportunity to share the knowledge I gained in the disaster areas and consult with people in my community as to how safe our local evacuation centers are and in what way they should be managed.
- I keenly felt that, in order to exercise leadership in times of disaster, women should develop capacities to take prompt actions and make proper judgements.
- Unlike media coverage such as in newspapers and on television, there was a certain dignity in what quake victims told us in person. I hope that many other people in Kitakyushu will have similar opportunities to get firsthand accounts from them.

Mr. Hitoshi KONNO

Chairman of the Katahira United Neighborhood Association

Positioning disaster risk reduction as one of its main themes for community development, Mr. Konno's neighborhood association had already established the necessary organizations and had engaged in various discussions. Accordingly, on the day after the disaster, the association was able to launch a committee to handle a wide variety of problems related to the disaster. However, there was one thing that they had not expected – responding to stranded commuters. The association dealt with this problem, which is peculiar to urban disaster areas, through the community's strong ties. Currently, the association implements disaster drills incorporating HUG (*hinanjo unei* game, meaning “evacuation center operation” game), Sendai Sonae Game (preparation game created in Sendai), and other fun events involving foreign residents. In addition, the association involves local students and international students even in the planning phase, and reinforces cooperation with apartment residents.



Mr. Masanobu SATO

Member of the Project for Speaking about the Disaster along the Sendai Coast in the Great East Japan Earthquake to Hand Down the Experience for the Next Generation, and Former Chairman of the Takasago 1-Chome Koen Temporary Housing Neighborhood Association

Almost everything in the area where Mr. Sato lived was washed away by the tsunami. In his evacuation center, there was no place to lie down and rest. He was very busy every day confirming the safety of local residents. After temporary housing was finally established, neighbors began to frequently call each other in their daily lives. The area where he used to live has been designated as a disaster prone area. Even after being relocated to a new home, Mr. Sato remained unsure about how his life would go on, and almost all his former neighbors began to live in separate localities. Today, however, they have organized Nakano Hometown School to hand down details of their former daily lives to the next generation, for example by making dioramas.



Ms. Sumie KANNO

Leader of Community Disaster Risk Reduction Efforts in Sendai City, and Manager of the Committee for Preparing the Disaster Risk Reduction Declaration for Women in Iwakiri

One year before the Great East Japan Earthquake, Ms. Kanno and her friends had formulated the Disaster Risk Reduction Declaration for Women in Iwakiri. Thanks to this, when the disaster occurred, she was able to rush to an evacuation center together with her friends to support the victims. However, because she did not have sufficient knowledge or judgment as a leader, many people were mentally hurt. Afterward, she participated in a program for fostering female leaders for disaster risk reduction and continued her efforts as a leader. As a result, she has now been recognized as a leader by community members. Currently, as a Leader of Community Disaster Risk Reduction Efforts in Sendai City, she is engaged in awareness programs for disaster risk reduction and disaster management, and provides instructions at evacuation centers, in the hope that children will be proud of being able to do something for their communities.



Ms. Emiko MUNAKATA

Representative Director of NPO Equal Net Sendai

Even before the Great East Japan Earthquake, Ms. Munakata's NPO had conducted research on female needs at the time of a disaster. After the disaster, the NPO provided necessary support for women, such as doing the laundry for them on a voluntary basis and holding events for women to meet and talk. Considering it as a serious problem that the leaders of almost all the evacuation centers were men and thus women's requests were seldom reflected, the NPO launched a program for fostering female leaders for disaster risk reduction, and supported 100 female leaders over three years. Currently, the network of female leaders is spreading not only throughout Sendai City but also through other areas affected by the disaster.



Bringing About a Change Collectively

Ms. Swapna MAJUMDAR (India)

Over 400 women from the backward and marginalised communities have joined hands to ensure their village council in Jhansi district in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh remain free of alcohol shops for the last four years.

This is no mean feat considering women here were rarely seen or heard outside their houses. It was only in 2008 that many women in Khajarahra Bujurg village council first stepped out to form self-help groups (SHGs) with the help of the Rajiv Gandhi Mahila Vikas Pariyojana (RGMVP), a non-profit institution working to empower women and alleviate poverty in the state. As the confidence of these women grew, so did the number of SHGs which increased from one to 40 in a span of four years, each with a membership of 10-15 women. In 2012, emboldened by the new-found awareness of their rights and success in pulling out their families from extreme poverty, these groups decided to take their biggest problem—alcoholism—head on.

“Alcoholism was a serious problem. During group discussions, we heard that some members’ jewellery was sold by their husbands to buy alcohol. Even when we went to our SHG meetings, we used to see men drinking on the roadside. They would taunt us, and it became a security risk as well. So we decided to put an end to it. This meant closing down the four alcohol shops in our village council,” said Meera, the president of Devi Mata SHG.

Interestingly, the biggest supporters of this decision were the wives and mothers of the men who ran the liquor shops. According to Nandini, she had tried to persuade her husband to close down the shop but he didn’t agree. “I am a SHG member and like the other women, I too wanted the shop to close, even it meant going against my husband. I also got the support of my mother-in-law. She is also a member of my SHG,” said Nandini.

However, they knew that it would be difficult for their SHG to do it alone. So a meeting of their village organisation, comprising these 40 SHGs, was called and a decision to close down the shops was endorsed by over 400 women who attended.

The men were approached and requested to close down their shops. When this didn’t work, a representative group of 40 women walked 12 km to the nearest police station to lodge a complaint and demanded the shops be closed down. This was followed up by a public rally by the women collectives the next day as a part of their anti-alcohol campaign.

“We also demonstrated in front of the police station. I also participated along with my mother-in-law. Her support



Profile
I am a Delhi based independent journalist for over 15 years, focusing on research-based articles on development issues and the role of women as agents of social change. In my writings, I have focused on India's development policy and its impact on people, women in particular.

was very crucial as I was raising my voice against my husband’s shop,” said Nandini.

“Thanks to the awareness training given to us, we have learnt how to demand our rights. We realised that if we resorted to violence, it would result in more violence. If we went to the police then it would be within the law,” said Meera, also the president of the village organisation.

Such was their fervour that the police were forced to come the following day and closed down the shops.

The next few days were filled with tension with some women, including Meera, receiving threats. But the women had a plan ready. Having seen the power of collective action, a group of 50 women sat cheek to jowl in a tractor to meet the district magistrate. Although they had no prior appointment, they were able to meet him and get his assurance.

However, the women did not stop there. They knew that in order to ensure their village council remained free of alcohol shops, they needed to reach out to rehabilitate the men who had been running them. The wives were given loans from their SHGs to allow their husbands to start afresh. “I received Rs 5,000 and my husband used it to start a small shop. Today, it is our main source of livelihood. It has allowed us to send our two children to a private school. We are very happy that he does not have to open an alcohol shop ever again,” said Nandini.



Women have joined hands to fight the menace of alcoholism.

Children’s Education and Family Lifestyle in My Country

Ms. Amelia LO (Hong Kong)

Education is an interesting area which highlights the difference between gender stereotypes. An interesting question is whether we are shaping the lives of boys and girls by the way we treat them, and the things we teach them.

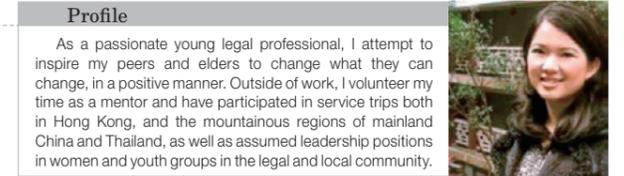
Anatomically, boys and girls are different, and there are also noticeable physical and psychological differences between boys and girls. However, many of those differences are psychological, rather than physical, and are obtained during the process of socialization, rather than by birth.

Since childhood, Chinese parents often treat boys and girls differently. Boys are often given masculine toys, and asked to play with guns and cars, while girls are often given toys such as dolls and kitchen utensils. This is in accordance with the roles boys and girls are expected to play in the world. When girls attempt to wear superhero costumes during Halloween, they are often met with a frown, and are told to dress up as a princess or a witch instead. Boys are often not allowed to play with dolls, nor paint their nails, or cry openly once they reach a certain age.

Appearance-wise, boys are expected to like blue, not pink. While girls are expected to like pink, not blue. Girls are expected to use cosmetics as they grow up, and due to negative influences from the mass media in which a girl’s worth is determined largely by her appearance, many girls are obsessed about their weight. Many students in Hong Kong are affected, including those as young as in primary and secondary school, calling themselves fat, and skipping breakfast or lunch. According to a Hong Kong filmmaker Nicola Fan, there were many, many voices around [her] telling how to be a girl, and I am sure these sentiments are shared by many.

During the secondary school, girls often learn home economics, a subject that has been found in the curriculum for nearly 50 years, and learn skills such as sewing, cooking and dishwashing. Education is meant to prepare us for the future, so if only girls know how to cook, would they be expected to be the ones heavily showered with housework in the future? Fortunately, after the Hong Kong Equal Opportunities Commission carried out a 1999 survey, nowadays home economics is no longer a female-only subject, and is often also offered as an option to boys in co-ed schools, which is gratifying as it shows that gender stereotypes are shifting and are becoming more positive.

So what is the basis for these stereotypes, rather than history and prejudices, and do these stereotypes actually represent the truth? For instance, it is often presumed that boys are better than girls in science. In fact, according to a



Profile
As a passionate young legal professional, I attempt to inspire my peers and elders to change what they can change, in a positive manner. Outside of work, I volunteer my time as a mentor and have participated in service trips both in Hong Kong, and the mountainous regions of mainland China and Thailand, as well as assumed leadership positions in women and youth groups in the legal and local community.

study¹ on 2,437 students from 140 Hong Kong schools, boys and girls shared similar scientific marks, although boys scored higher than girls at the higher percentiles. Thus, it is clear that boys and girls, when educated with a similar curriculum, can both do well in the sciences. Unfortunately, in today’s society in Hong Kong, there is still a belief that “women aren’t as good in mathematics as men”. This may lead parents to have lower expectations for their daughters, while daughters to believe that they cannot do well in mathematics, and subsequently less girls to study mathematics or sciences, as a form of “self-fulfilling prophecy”.

Margaret Thatcher once said. “Watch your thoughts, for they will become actions. Watch your actions, for they will become habits. Watch your habits, for they will forge your character. Watch your character, for it will make your destiny.”

It is time indeed to examine our beliefs and expectations of how boys and girls should behave, as they determine our treatment of young boys and girls, and it is normal interaction through families, schools and society that shapes the lives of these individuals. Perhaps it is with the changing of our views on gender that we can allow young boys and girls to become who they want to be, rather than who they are supposed to be!

¹ http://www.fed.cuhk.edu.hk/~hkpisa/output/files/Yip_Chui_Ho_2004_Gender_Sci.pdf



A girl encouraged to dress up as a gentle princess during Halloween

Future of Aging Asia – Senior Citizens and Women as Human Resources

Date & time Friday, September 21, 2016, 13:00 – 15:00
Lecturer Takeo OGAWA (Project researcher at the Fukuoka Asian Urban Research Center)
Participants 31

The advancement of the aging society is found not only in developed countries, but also in Asian countries that maintain a strong image of having young average populations. According to population projections by the U.N., it is expected that the population aging rate will exceed 30% in Korea and 20% in China in 2040.

Without changing the current systems and values, it will one day be impossible to continue to support society in these countries. It is necessary to create totally new social systems that will enable all citizens regardless of age and gender to fully develop their potential.

While incorporating the perspective of gender equality, the lecturer and participants considered the contribution of senior citizens to invigorating communities, the creation of new business models in aging society, the potential of the Japanese-version of CCRC, and other themes, beyond generations.



What is a Family Tie? – Consider the Question through Comparison between Japan and Indonesia –

Date & time Sunday, October 23, 2016, 10:00 – 12:00
Lecturer Kyoko HIKITA (Associate professor at Kagoshima Prefectural College)
Participants 22

Today, with the diversification in family forms, there are growing calls for revising family law, including the introduction of an optional two-surname system for married couples. On the other hand, the idea has been firmly established that members of the same family should use the same surname in order to retain their unity as a family. The Supreme Court held the current same-surname system constitutional.

A similar discussion is found in Indonesia as well. While some are calling for marriages between those with different religious beliefs to be permitted, others have the opposing view of the family that it is ideal for members of the same family to embrace the same religion.

Indicating the conflict in Indonesia between the calls for family diversity and calls for the existing family form to be maintained, the lecturer concluded by encouraging the participants to engage in a deeper discussion on the two-surname system for married couples from diverse perspectives.



Report on Career Development for High School Students

Career Development Program for Jiyugaoka High School Students

Date & time Saturday, September 17, 2016, 8:55 – 10:45
Venue Audio-visual classroom, Jiyugaoka High School
Lecturers Koichi MATSUMOTO (Associate Professor, Kyushu International University)
 Naosuke YAMAWAKI (Lecturer, Kyushu Kyoritsu University and other educational institutes)

Panelists with professional careers Momoyo HASHIMOTO, Hiroto YATSUDA, and Shiori WATANABE
Participants 200 third-year students of Jiyugaoka High School

Preparing a career development program, KFAW holds on-site classes. In this fiscal year, we held a lecture using the program at Jiyugaoka High School, and a talk session featuring young working adults as role models.

The lecture was designed for high school students to consider what working meant and what social problems were. This was followed by the talk session featuring three working adults, who spoke about their former campus lives, current jobs, and other specific themes. The high school students asked many questions on entrance examinations, studying abroad, having a good balance between club activities and studying, dating, etc., making the atmosphere at the venue even more exciting.



Career Development Seminar “What You Would Like to Be”

Date & time Saturday, November 12, 2016, 17:45 – 20:00
Venue Yahatanishi General Lifelong Learning General Center, Conference Room 204
Lecturers Lecture & workshop: Kazuhiro MANABE (Professor, University of Kitakyushu)
Talk live Kunitaka KANEHIRO (Representative, Kitakyuman Project)
 Miho KASAI (Newscaster with News Bridge Kitakyushu, NHK)
Participants 48 high school students (selected from among applicants solicited from the public)

In this fiscal year, KFAW held a career development seminar for high school students in cooperation with Kitakyushu Hitomirai Place. Through a lecture, a live talk session and a workshop, high school participants considered their studies and their future careers.

It is said that 80% of the events in one’s life are determined by coincidence. It is, however, up to you whether you can take advantage of such coincidences or not. The key lies in continuing to find what you would like to do. The lecturers encouraged the high school students to give it a try based on a recognition of what they liked without fear of failure.

