

# Asian Breeze

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KITAKYUSHU FORUM ON ASIAN WOMEN (KFAW) June 2013 Triannual Publication

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of Its Establishment This Year and Making a New Start as  
a Public Interest Incorporated Foundation on April 1 !**

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# Women Today

## “Japanese Women and Leadership Development”

Under the Constitution of Japan (1947), gender equality is legally guaranteed and women are supposed to be able to fully demonstrate their abilities in political, economic, cultural, social and all other fields. However, according to the Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI), Japan ranked 101st among 135 countries last year.

As indicated in several measures promoted by the government, there is a trend in Japan to promote the employment of women. However, the percentage of female members in the House of Representatives is only 7.9%, and the percentage of female managers at companies is only 10.6%.

Since the establishment of the Equal Employment Opportunity Law for Men and Women in 1985, the Childcare Leave Law in 1991 and the several subsequent revisions, equal employment opportunities are legally guaranteed. This has led to a gradual creation of an environment where women can balance between child rearing and careers. The decrease in the women's laborforce during their child rearing period has been declining as more women continue to work.

### ■ Why are there few female leaders in Japan?

This is attributed to the following:

1. Educational levels for women are still slightly lower than those for men. Few female students major in science, engineering, law, and economics.
2. The responsibilities for household chores, parenting, child education and elderly care are mostly borne by women. Additionally, support services are insufficient. Thus, it is difficult for women to establish long-term careers.
3. There is a bias against the capacity and qualifications of women as leaders. This deprives women of opportunities and experiences to act as leaders.
4. Women themselves are not confident enough to assume the risk of becoming leaders, and there are few mentors or colleagues who encourage women to try.
5. Not recognizing the necessity of female leaders, society has not taken positive action so far.

As for 1, political measures have been taken to increase the number of female students in scientific majors. Additionally, universities are making efforts to attract female prospective students.

As for 2, most support services are too expensive to utilize. This point needs to be considered.

In my opinion, the small number of female leaders in Japan is related to the country's strong preference for homogeneity. More measures regarding 3, 4 and 5 should be taken. Japanese companies and organizations have been successful by utilizing homogeneity, teamwork,



坂東真理子

President, Showa Women's University

Mariko BANDO

ingenuity, and making improvements. On the other hand, they have been bad at integrating a wide variety of human resources to achieve goals. To remain competitive, however, Japan has no option but to promote diversity. To this end, women are required to demonstrate their own perspectives and values and open new frontiers for society and organizations.

### ■ Three steps to gain more female leaders.

First, women need a good education for necessary knowledge and skills.

Second, women need to learn the rules and etiquette for working at companies and other organizations in society, and to improve their communication skills. They also need to develop their career and life style design from a long-term perspective, and to find appropriate mentors and role models.

Third, women need to pursue virtue. Without sticking to their own interests, women leaders need to act for the interests of other people and society. They have compassion and sympathy for the weak and those in trouble, and are always ready to face difficulties and to make self-sacrifices. Such female leaders will be respected in society.

Female leaders should possess ideals and visions different from those of men and to establish a new form of management to realize them.

Required now are not leaders with a male perspective in which the focus is placed on beating rivals for more power and higher income, but female leaders, who strive to ensure that people help, nurture and learn from each other. The immediate goal is to raise the number and hence percentage of female leaders, although the ultimate goal is to increase the number of excellent leaders.

### Profile of Mariko BANDO

Born in Toyama Prefecture. Graduated from the University of Tokyo in 1969 and joined the Prime Minister's Office. After assuming the positions of counsellor at the Cabinet Public Relations Office, director of the Consumer Statistics Division of the Statistics Bureau, director general of the Gender Equality Office, vice-governor of Saitama Prefecture, and consul general of Japan in Brisbane, became the director general of the Gender Equality Bureau of the Cabinet Office in 2001. Has served as professor at a graduate school of Showa Women's University and the director of the university's Institute of Women's Culture since 2004. Also has held the position of the president at Showa Women's University since 2007.

Has published *U.S. Career Women Situations, Vice-Governor Diary, The Dignity of a Woman, Rust-Free Way of Living, What Working Means*, and many other works.

## A Greeting from new President

I am very pleased and honored to take up the post of President of the Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women (KFAW) on April 1, 2013. This is particularly so, because for the past 18 years I have been engaged in promoting human development in Asia, including gender equality and a better future for children at different organizations such as the U.N., universities and NGOs.

This year KFAW celebrates its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of establishment as a foundation, now being authorized as a public interest incorporated foundation by the Cabinet Office. In this commemorative year, we are renewing our commitments to work for empowerment of women and gender equality in Asia and Kitakyushu City. We

will do this by means of research and exchange programs and through practical activities.

Recognizing the great challenges that KFAW must face in an ever changing world, we know that we must do more, and we must do it better. For these efforts we count on your support.

Let me add that as for myself, I am very much looking forward to working with and for the women in the Forum. It is my sincere hope that we will be able to strengthen our engagement with the region on gender issues in deeper and more significant ways.



President  
Mitsuko HORIUCHI

### Special Contribution

## “A Lesson from the Arab Spring”

Ms. Tawakkol KARMAN (2011 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate)

From the end of 2010 to 2011, large-scale pro-democracy movements began occurring across North Africa and the Middle East. These movements became known as the “Arab Spring,” which is still progressing with difficulty. One of those playing a major role in such pro-democracy movements has been Ms. Tawakkol KARMAN. She demonstrated her leadership in the democratization and women’s movements in Yemen.

As a writer, journalist and political activist, Ms. KARMAN has continued her non-violent actions to demand rights for women to safely and fully participate in peace establishment activities. In global recognition of her non-violent actions, in 2011 she became the first Arab woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize, along with Ms. Ellen Johnson SIRLEAF, President of Liberia, and Ms. Leymah GBOWEE, also a peace activist.

KFAW interviewed Ms. KARMAN by email. She explained about the Arab Spring, and delivered a message for young people in Japan.



The Arab Spring does not refer to the governments that follow the fall of the regimes, but rather the young Arab people who started the revolution, and adopted and protected it as their mission. Our Spring is for the young people who are tired of

corruption and tyrannical states, and the states dominated by individuals or one family. It is our young people who have dreamt of a state with equal citizenship, of a state that guarantees freedom and dignity. It is the young who have the courage and the power to sacrifice themselves in order to overthrow those regimes and change them. Therefore, the success of the Arab Spring revolutions should not be judged by the success or failure of the governments that followed the fall of those regimes. They should be judged according to the extent to which the Arab youth will maintain their self-confidence and ability to repeat and retain their revolutionary action to ensure that they achieve the objectives of their revolution, and to resist any deviation or default in achieving the aims for which the revolution was started.

We can say that the first lesson of the Arab Spring revolutions is that the governments and their officials are believed to be guilty and have to prove themselves innocent every day, and that they are the projects of tyrants, and thus it would be foolish to rely on their good intentions.

Their good intentions can only be trusted by relying on control and popular accountability, which go in line with sustainable revolutionary action in the streets and squares. Thus, the dynamic of the streets and squares in the Arab Spring countries is the measure of the success of these Spring revolutions. It is neither led by letting those governments clear the atmosphere, nor by the governments’ ability to convince the youth, deceive, suppress, or silence them. We extend a big greeting to our splendid youth in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Libya, and Syria, and a big greeting to all the streets and squares, as well as to all the young people who remain to be convinced.

In short: No need to worry, nor to be surprised. This is the Arab Spring. This is our extended Spring. Regimes Held Accountable by the People and Governments Being Run by the Squares.

### Profile

#### Tawakkol KARMAN



A female activist, politician, writer and journalist in Yemen.

Continuing to insist the significance of peaceful demonstration in Yemen, she is called in her country the Mother of the

Revolution and has been playing a lead role in the pro-democracy and women’s movements.

Born February 7, 1979, she is a mother of three children. In recognition of her contribution to the nonviolent pro-democracy movement, in 2011 she became the first Arab woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize.

# Reports on Participation

## in the 57th U.N. Commission on the Status of Women (CSW57)

The United Nations (U.N.) Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is one of the U.N.'s six major organizations. Placed under the ECOSOC, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is a functional commission engaged in issues related to women's rights.

Accredited with NGO Special Consultative Status to the ECOSOC, the Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women (KFAW) participates in an annual CSW held at the U.N. Headquarters in New York, in order to exchange information with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) both from Japan and other countries and present our research results.



Opening ceremony  
(greeting from U.N. Women Executive Director Michelle BACHELET)

The 57th U.N. Commission on the Status of Women (CSW57) was held for 12 days from March 4, 2013 to March 15 in New York. The CSW57's priority theme was "Elimination and Prevention of All Forms of Violence against Women and Girls." This theme attracted much more participants' attention than usual, from 131 countries.

This year, on top of participating in CSW, KFAW, in conjunction with Ripple Fukuoka, held a parallel event as part of the NGO CSW Forum for Women that coincided with the regular session of the U.N. CSW. Ripple Fukuoka is a citizen group established by dating violence preventive education facilitators trained by KFAW. The theme of the parallel event was "Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women and the Prevention on Dating / Domestic Violence."

The event included KFAW's presentations on our various efforts to prevent dating / domestic violence, such as training dating violence preventive education facilitators, providing dating violence preventive education at schools in Kitakyushu City, and holding a symposium "Get United - To Eliminate Violence against Women and Girls" at "Kitakyushu Conference on Asian Women." The event also included Ripple Fukuoka's presentation on its dating violence preventive education activities.

After the presentations, audience members asked many questions. Of particular note was the presentation by Ripple



Fukuoka, which provides dating violence preventive education at high schools, universities, and other schools in Kitakyushu City. Its presentation drew strong attention from the audience, leading to a high-level and active Q&A session.

In the 90 minutes allocated to KFAW, four presentations and a Q&A session were held. During the CSW period, approximately 360 parallel events were held by NGOs at four venues in New York.

Additionally, 128 CSW57 official side events were held. Featuring timely and important themes, such as the elimination of child marriages, preservation of disabled people's rights, and achievement of justice and delivery of full-scale services for violence victims, these events included active discussions.

The outcome of the CSW took the form of conclusions to prevent and eliminate violence against women and girls, which were agreed to by the 45 member countries.

At the end of the CSW57 on March 15, U.N. Women Executive Director Michelle BACHELET announced her resignation during her CSW closing address. She said that she would return to her native country, the Republic of Chile. She promised that she would continue to do her best to achieve empowerment and gender equality for women.

### "Participating in the CSW57"

Akino KANSUI, Vice President, Ripple Fukuoka

This was my first participation in the CSW. I have learned a lot from this experience. What inspired me most was how strong women were, regardless of the countries they come from, when asserting their opinions. For example, whether they were good or bad at English, some women presented their opinions without a microphone. Some women sold specialty products from their countries at the venue hall which was turned into a huge flea market. There were people from various countries looking at those women. Actually, affected by the exciting atmosphere, I purchased a carved wooden giraffe from one of them for 30 dollars. I was not sure if the proceeds would become her own pocket money or be used for her organization. But this made me keenly aware of the brave strength and flexibility of women avoiding formality. I was totally impressed.

I believe we lack this type of enthusiasm. We are not yet fully determined to achieve at any cost a society where all men and women can live comfortably. Worried about doing something unconventional, we are so occupied with dealing with immediate problems that we tend to forget our original purpose. We need to make even more earnest efforts and live our lives even more seriously. Stirring up my excitement, the days at the CSW made me realize the necessity to do so.

# “Multicultural Coexistence in Japan, Korea, and the U.S.”



The keynote report “Current Situation and Challenges on Multicultural Coexistence in Incheon Metropolitan City” was given by President KIM Min-Bae of the Incheon Development Institute (IDI). The number of non-Korean permanent residents in Korea has reached 1.39 million (as of 2011), or 2.5% of the country’s total

population. It is presumed to increase to 10% in the future. This is induced by the rise in the numbers of foreign workers and migrant women due to international marriages. With the increase in the number of multicultural families (families formed through international marriages), the Multicultural Family Support Act was legislated in 2011. Korean society has made a large shift from its ethnic homogeneity to a multicultural philosophy in order to survive in this age of birth rate decline and globalization.

In Incheon Metropolitan City, many NPOs and NGOs are working on multicultural coexistence, leading the general public to greater awareness of the issue, such as problems of migrant women after their international marriages. Mr. KIM concluded his address by indicating that it is important to create a society where people with different cultures can live in harmony, and to involve many citizens for the better society.

**Trend of foreign permanent residents in Japan and Korea**



Source: Ministry of Justice “Statistics of Alien Registration” (Japan)  
“Annual Report on Statistics of Immigration Policies” (Korea)

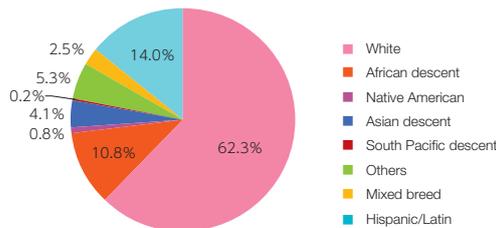
President KIM’s address was followed by a report by Ms. Kay MAKISHI, Coordinator of International Relations at the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program, on “Multicultural Coexistence and Women’s Participation in Society in the U.S.” The U.S. society was once characterized by the concept of the “melting pot” (minority groups abandon their own cultures and languages and merge into the majority group). Now, the focus has been shifted from that to the concept of the “salad bowl” (minority groups ensure coexistence, while respecting their own cultures and languages). This has transcended the boundaries of just racial and ethnic categories, forming diverse society for a wide range of minority groups, including gays, the disabled, and sexual minority groups.

As one of the efforts toward multicultural coexistence, she introduced the U.S. educational system. Differences in comparison with the Japanese system include 1) emphasis on understanding different cultures; 2) assessment of students from general aspects, including music, club, and



volunteer activities, rather than based only on examination results; and 3) demand for students to express their opinions appropriately. It is thought that this helps build the foundation to accept people who are different from themselves, raise awareness to contribute to society and respect diversity in society.

**Ethnic Population Composition in the U.S. (2010)**



Source : U.S. Census Bureau (2011) “American Fact Finder”



Afterwards, Associate Professor Yuriko SAITO of Meiji Gakuin University presented a report titled “Multicultural Coexistence in Japan - Focus on Women and Children.” Japanese policies on multicultural coexistence have been mainly about the administrative aspects of foreign residents in Japan. Multicultural coexistence policies have been

promoted under the leadership of municipalities where there are many foreign permanent residents. Ms. SAITO indicated that in the age of global competition, it is necessary to improve policies on the national level to address various challenges, such as the birth rate decline and the aging population, as well as the future labor shortage.

She also mentioned Kitakyushu City’s advantageous characteristics, such as its geographical proximity to Asian countries and its being home to international organizations, such as KFAW, JICA, and UN Women. She raised a question of whether, despite the coexistence of many foreign people, multicultural human resources are fully utilized in the city. She concluded her report by proposing that multicultural coexistence does not mean support (service) for foreign people, but living together, and that it will be necessary for the future international society to allow people to express their opinions freely.

The subsequent panel discussion was coordinated by Associate Professor SAITO. The discussion further explored what had been presented by each panelist. A Q&A session featured active exchange of opinions, enabling all the participants to share future challenges.



## Female Union Council (UP) Members

Mr. Mizanur RAHMAN (Bangladesh)

### Profile

I am a journalist turned to development organizer and an ex-professional journalist of the 2nd largest national newspaper, "the Daily Inqilab," (1983-1994) I served as Deputy Director, Manush Manusher Jonnyo, NGO (1995-2006) and as its Director, 2007 until now. I am interested in women development. My lifelong endeavor is to empower women through education and skill training to survive in life. I have made efforts for the safety and sustainability of poor women's food, clothing, shelter, access right to health service, education for life and dignity as human beings in the community. I believe that focusing women in the media is the best tool to make a change.



Bangladesh is a country of villages (79,828), with the majority of people living in rural areas. All people know about the Union Council (Parishad/Panchayat in India)—the grassroots level, rural-based local government agency representing the community. There are 4486 Union Councils (UP) throughout Bangladesh. The Union Council is the lowest tier of the administrative unit in Bangladesh. Its main functions include public welfare, maintenance of law and order, revenue collection, development, relief and rehabilitation works, and distribution of foods and materials provided by the government and NGOs. Its source of income includes grants, taxes, fees, and other sources.



Ms. Khurshida, a social worker, became a new UP member.

The UPs are governed by one elected chairperson, nine regular members and three female members: both men and women can run for the position of chairperson and the nine regular members, but three seats are reserved for women in order to ensure gender equality and empower women who may be found in vulnerable positions. The voters of the Union Council

directly elect all. UP female members often focus on development planning and implementation to eliminate poverty. My area's former member Nasrin emerged as a development provider and newly-elected Ms. Morzina determined to render better services.

Newly elected UP female members are concerned about their duties and responsibilities. They can sometimes be deprived of assigned works because of their political affiliations and/or affinity with opposition parties, which may be in direct opposition to the current ruling party.

A tough balance must be maintained between the leaders and their constituents at the village level in order to get enough aid, relief, assistance and funding for development projects. There are women members (both reserved positions and directly elected) and female chairpersons in positions of

leadership in rural Bangladesh that manage village-centric development projects, distribute of food cards for vulnerable groups, women and landless people, administer and monitor welfare programs, and launch advocacy and awareness programs for women. Almost all women UP members are kitchen managers and have become grassroots-level development actors and pioneers for empowering women and gender equality.

The government's outlook for empowering women's media campaigns, training schemes for female UP members and local movements can strengthen the pivotal role of female UP members as a key catalytic agent of socio-economic change in the countryside. Kitchen managers have become a driving force to alleviate poverty among the rootless community. They need training from the government, CSOs and NGOs to address the needs of the stakeholders and voters. They distribute grants to widows, the destitute, those with disabilities, maintain law and order, halt eve teasing, prevent the trafficking of women and children, and act as local arbitrators in rape cases, violence towards women, divorce, child marriage, and dowries. In most cases, female UP members have good relationships with their male counterparts, but a few are coldly rebuffed and may be on the receiving end of cold and undesirable behavior. There are different committees within the UP headed by members, such as law and order, family planning, women and children and lucrative project committees, but the latter committee is often led by men because of gender inequality. There are many standing committees at UP ordinance papers but in practice they do not exist. As well, within the context of work allocation, female UP members are often deprived of their actual rights.

Female UP members may be pioneers in different fields of development, and require intensive training to achieve realistic measures to enhance rural welfare programs. It may be feasible for the Local Government Ministry, Members of Parliament (MP), Deputy Commissioners (DC), Sub-Districts Officers (UNO) and Chairpersons to allocate more assignments to empower female UP members as the people's voice and real players during times of distress, such as cyclones, famines and other natural disasters, in daily life.

## THE FORUM WINDOW

In Korea, the presidential election was held last December. The winner was Ms. PARK Geun-hye, Korea's first female presidential candidate. She was later inaugurated as the country's 18th President. The world is paying keen attention to how President PARK Geun-hye will manage Korea over the coming

five years as a country's leader. KFAW will also pay close attention to how the inauguration of a female president will affect the progress of gender equality in Korea.

The report on the election of President PARK Geun-hye has been contributed by KFAW foreign correspondent, Ms. KIM Young Joo. Details are available at KFAW's website.

URL <http://www.kfaw.or.jp/correspondents/>

## “How Poverty Affects the Education of Girls in Sri Lanka”

Ms. Thilini WIJETUNGE (Sri Lanka)

Sri Lanka has achieved remarkable progress in the region, and even globally as more females enter into the higher education stream. The country has achieved over 80% enrolment of women as law students and over 50% as medical students, and there are many more women who have access to free education in the public university system. Despite these achievements, however, there are stories of girls who are deprived of their rights to education, mainly due to poverty.

There are many stories which relate to the above problem in the local context. The story of Sanoja, the eldest daughter of a family in a remote village in a central northern province in Sri Lanka, depicts the hardships that young women have to go through due to social pressure and economical strain. Her mother, having had to leave the home to go to the Middle East as a domestic worker due to economic hardships, has left the care of the little children in the hands of her eldest daughter, Sanoja. Being just 12 years old, she was supposed to do all household chores in the absence of the mother, in addition to taking care of the younger siblings of the family. Although she managed these duties at the beginning with the help of her father, gradually she lost his support and had to attend to all tasks by herself. Under these circumstances, Sanoja had to stop her education and became a full-time worker in her own house. Despite doing all this work, Sanoja was subjected to harassment by her father due to various unpleasant incidents such as the taste of the food and not being able to prepare meals on time. Because of this situation, Sanoja became miserable and held no hope for her future. There are many girls with similar stories in Sri Lanka, mainly in rural areas and in under-educated and poverty-affected families.

Sri Lanka is a country where many women seek foreign employment as domestic servants due to economic burdens of their families. There are many situations where even young girls try to go outside of the country for employment opportunities, in search of more financial sustenance to support their families. They face a lot of hardships due to inexperience and immaturity while working abroad in unfamiliar and strange circumstances. The story of Rizana NAFEEK who was beheaded in Saudi Arabia in January this year after being convicted of murdering a child under her care is one such example which proves the tragic circumstances that these women face after migrating as domestic workers without having experience in such trades.

Rizana was born in 1988, but was forced to alter her date of birth to secure employment as a house maid. She had been forced to alter her passport to indicate the year of birth as 1982. She had been sent abroad as a domestic servant to a family in Saudi Arabia. After starting working, she was assigned to bottle-feed an infant of four months. Rizana, having had no experience of taking care of such a tiny infant,

### Profile

I am a BA Honors graduate and possess double Masters in International Relations and Linguistics. I have been working as a language lecturer since 2008. I am currently working at Kotalawala Defence University in Sri Lanka as an English lecturer. Being a language lecturer at a defence university, I have been associating with male and female adolescents engaged in various defence activities.

My mother is a senior government servant and has been actively contributing to gender equality in Sri Lanka. I also have been influenced by this and have developed a passion to read and write on gender issues.



had no understanding of the task she was handling nor any clue as to what she was about to face. While she was feeding, the baby started choking, which ultimately and tragically led to his death. After this incident, Rizana was handed over to the police along with accusations that she had strangled the baby. She was very harshly treated at the police station and was not able to explain what had happened due to language problems, and without even a lawyer at her trials or her family to support her, she had to face many inexplicably difficult and strenuous hardships.

Ultimately, she was convicted of murdering the child and was subsequently beheaded. Although many accept that this is a gross Human Rights violation, even the efforts of Sri Lankan Government were of no avail, and have not elicited sympathy for her plight.

All these stories well represent the deprivation of women and girl children due to poverty. Particularly, girls in poor families are not only deprived of their rights to education due to poverty but are also subject to gender-based violence and sexual harassment in their efforts to fulfill their basic needs. These girl children and their mothers are compelled to seek employment in foreign countries as domestic workers mainly to earn an income for family survival, and in many cases, with the intention of building a house. Once mothers leave their families to make ends meet, they suffer from both ends. While being employed in foreign countries, many are subjected to various forms of sexual harassment and their children suffer here at home without the care and protection by their mothers. Girls, in particular, are denied their right to education and are subject to gender-based violence, including rape, incest and various forms of sexual harassment.

In view of this situation despite the remarkable achievements in education, there is another side to the story: poverty has caused a lot of women and girls to undergo extremely difficult situations. Although the numbers are decreasing, we still hear such stories daily. There may be a lot of Sanojas or Rizanas in the current world. Some families suffer without even receiving any information about their female members who have gone abroad as housemaids. Their employers or job agencies do not provide any information about these women. Sometimes, after a long lapse of silence, the families are informed that these women have been injured or dead. Hence, until the country reaches its targets in poverty reduction, it is not fair to boast only about the achievements in education.

**The 3<sup>rd</sup> Seminar “Recent State of Affairs in Singapore: Falling Birthrates and Progressive Greying of the Population”**

**Date and time** December 20, Thursday, 2012, 18:30 - 20:00

**Lecturer** Ms. Keiko TAMURA, Professor, Graduate School of the University of Kitakyushu

Singapore, a small city state in Southeastern Asia, is well-known for having achieved an economic prosperity even greater than that of Japan. At the same time, just like Japan, Singapore is facing the serious social problems of a rapidly declining birthrate and an aging population.

As a country with almost no natural resources, Singapore has long believed that human resources are their only resources and have strived to improve their labor force from both quantity and quality perspectives. Of particular note is the social advancement of women in the country. The former Prime Minister, LEE Kuan Yew, believed that there would be no future in society if half of the population was not educated or utilized just because they were women. He thought that women in Singapore should receive a good education and their abilities should be fully utilized. Based upon this belief, Singapore has been actively promoting efforts to encourage women to work outside the home, such as by promoting primary and secondary education, and accepting foreign domestic workers. As a result, in 2011, a considerable increase was observed both in women's labor participation rate (60%) and the percentage of women managers within the government and in other public organizations (35.1%). However, the total fertility rate decreased from 3.1 in 1970 to 1.15 in 2010, indicating the rapid decline in the birthrate.

To resolve this situation, the government is promoting a wide variety of measures, such as providing family support and increasing the number of foreign domestic workers. However, many more people believe that these are merely makeshift measures that will not produce favorable long-term results. In this regard, it is expected that drastic measures will be taken in the future.



**The 4<sup>th</sup> Seminar “Growth through Diversity: Issue of Gender, Economy and Ethnicity in Malaysia”**

**Date and time** January 17, Thursday, 2013, 18:30 - 20:00

**Lecturer** Ms. Ayame SUZUKI, Lecturer, Fukuoka Women's University

In the 1980s, Malaysia adopted the Look East Policy, in which the country strived to achieve economic development by introducing the work ethics of Japan and Korea, technology and management policies, and other elements. Subsequently, Malaysia realized rapid economic growth, and is currently aiming to join the ranks of developed countries by 2020.

On the other hand, it is true that Malaysia has the history of struggle for the coexistence of ethnic groups. The Bumiputera Policy (an economic policy giving preference to certain ethnic groups) implemented in order to eliminate economic disparity among ethnic groups, guaranteed the Malay race and other Bumiputera special status. A wide range of affirmative actions were taken in the fields of education, employment, house purchase, etc. This policy certainly reduced economic disparity among ethnic groups, but triggered a brain drain of non-Bumiputera who were unhappy with the policy, reportedly affecting the country's economic development. Moreover, in politics, a harmony among ethnic groups was prioritized leading to some restrictions of citizens' rights.

However, some citizen groups began to promote activities to expand individual freedom and governmental transparency beyond the ethnic boundaries. Particularly, considerably affected the revision of the Criminal Evidence Act (Rape Act) and the establishment of the Domestic Violence Act.

Malaysia is today shifting towards the growth through diversity. Under the slogan “One Malaysia,” the current NAJIB administration has adopted a strategy aiming to gradually eliminate discrimination between ethnic groups and to accept the value of every such group. Moreover, the administration is striving to increase the employment of women to enhance labor productivity. Malaysia has the potential to become a thriving country where people can contribute the economic development by demonstrating their own strength.



**Information**

**Celebrating KFAW's 20th Anniversary of Its Establishment This Year and Making a New Start as a Public Interest Incorporated Foundation on April 1!**

Striving to resolve gender issues, KFAW will implement further programs that generate significant public benefits and contribute to the enhancement of welfare for the general public. KFAW will continue to promote the improvement of the status of women in Japan and other Asian countries, as well as working towards the realization of a gender-equal society.



**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 is to promote the improvement of women's status through various projects as well as their mutual understanding and cooperation in Asia.