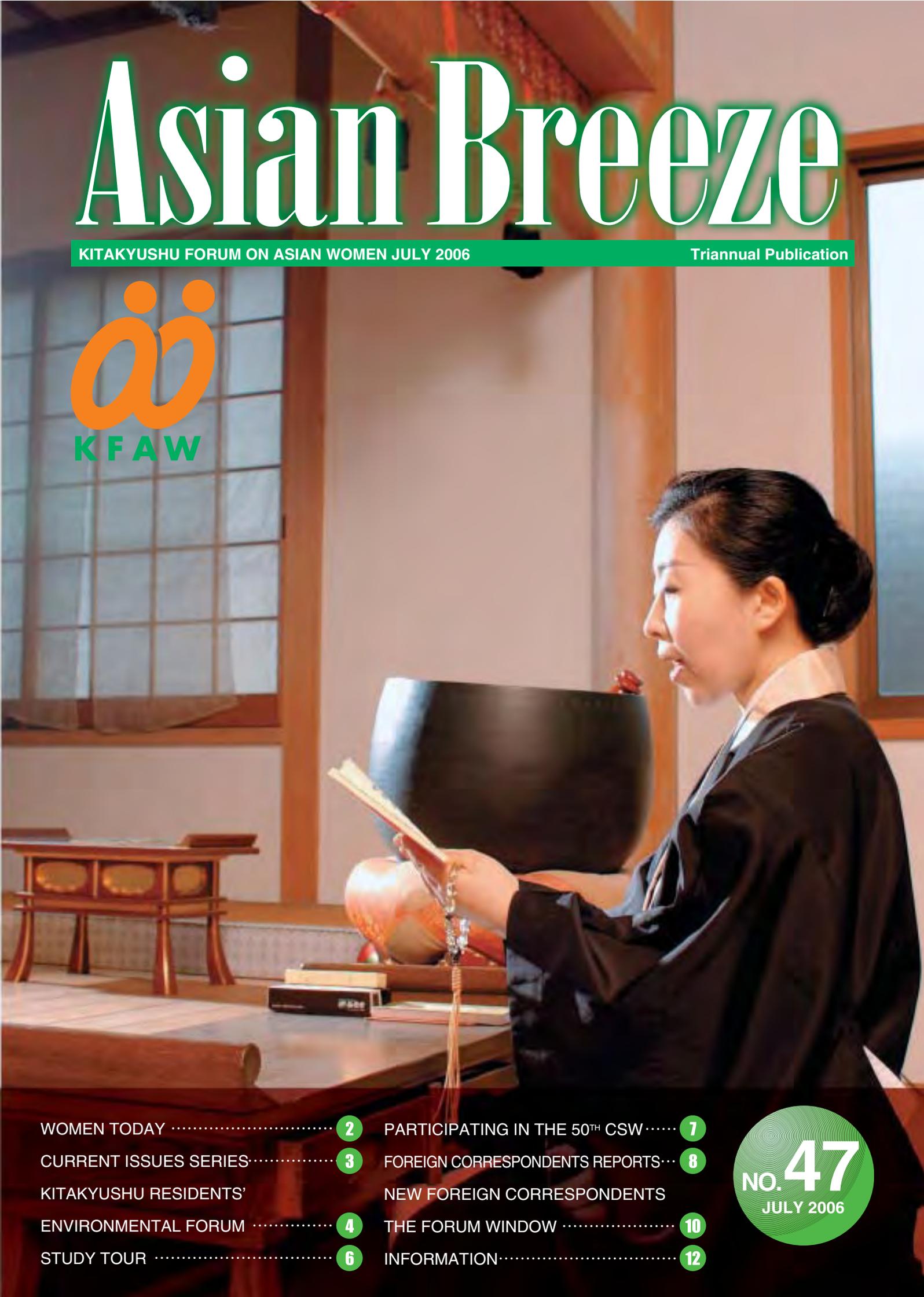


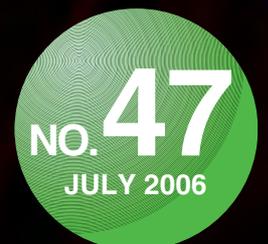
# Asian Breeze

KITAKYUSHU FORUM ON ASIAN WOMEN JULY 2006

Triannual Publication



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## The “Asian Century” must include a greater role for women



*H. Kuroda*

**Mr. Haruhiko Kuroda**  
President,  
Asian Development Bank

When the Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women was established in 1990, some 920 million Asian people lived on less than one dollar a day. By 2003, that number had dropped to about 620 million - an impressive feat, driven largely by rapid and sustained economic growth.

But to reach Asia's full potential, much needs to be done to ensure that all citizens have the opportunity to participate in, contribute to, and benefit from growth. With more than two-thirds of the world's poor, how Asia manages its development challenges will most certainly, and profoundly, affect our global destiny.

Maintaining rapid growth is essential to ensure that region's poor and underprivileged have a better future. This will require substantial investments, particularly in infrastructure services to provide access to markets, encourage private sector development and create jobs. It will also require deeper regional integration to connect poorer countries to opportunities in the global economy.

But economic growth alone is not enough. Increased efforts are needed to include women and other disadvantaged groups in the process of growth. It is well known that women suffer disproportionately from poverty. In much of developing Asia, women are much less likely than men to have decent employment opportunities, access to education and health services, or a voice in the governance of their communities and their countries.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) provide clear targets for reducing world poverty by 2015. As measured against the MDG indicators on promoting gender equality and empowering women, most Asian countries are making good progress on eliminating gender disparity in education. In Bangladesh, for instance, only about half as many girls as boys were enrolling in secondary schools in 1990. By 2001, this disparity had been completely eliminated, with girls even having a slightly higher enrollment than boys.

However, women clearly still face significant barriers preventing them from accessing well-paid jobs in the public and private sectors, earning equal wages, and participating in national parliaments. Moreover, the fact that about a quarter of a million women in Asia and the Pacific die each year from complications related to pregnancy or childbirth demonstrates the depth of deprivation far too many women face in accessing even the most basic of services.

As a regional development institution focused on poverty reduction, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) is committed to helping its developing member countries (DMCs) tackle such barriers to

improve women's prospects. In keeping with this commitment, a growing proportion of ADB-funded projects in areas like health, education, transport and rural infrastructure, agriculture, water supply and natural resource management specifically address gender disparities and empower women to play a larger role in decisions that affect them. Qualified gender specialists in ADB headquarters and field offices are working to build partnerships with governments, communities and other development agencies; increase awareness and skills pertaining to address gender issues; and identify and implement projects through which women can actively improve their own lives, as well as those of their families and communities.

One of ADB's rural infrastructure projects in Bangladesh recruited women as laborers alongside men. It also employed more than 2,000 women in tree planting and road maintenance, and trained hundreds more in shop management to promote women's participation in rural markets. In the Lao People's Democratic Republic, female enrolment in rural schools increased by 20% over a five year period, due to a partnership agreement between the Government and ADB to bring education to girls of ethnic minorities living in remote villages. Poor women in Pakistan are building their own businesses with the assistance of microfinance loans from the ADB-supported Khushhal Bank. More than 50,000 women have benefited from this opportunity to increase their incomes, educate and improve the health of their children, and contribute to further development of their communities. To help improve primary health care in Afghanistan, which has the highest maternal death rate in Asia, ADB has provided grant funding to set up community health centers, train health workers, and contract non-government organizations to support communities in delivering health services.

While the challenge ahead is large, progress is being made. Projects like these are making a real difference in women's lives. ADB is firmly committed to working with partners in government, civil society, other development organizations and the international community to ensure that the Asian century is one in which all members of society can share.

### Profile

Mr. Kuroda joined the Ministry of Finance in 1967. Director-General of the International Bureau and as Vice Minister of Finance between 1997 and 2003. He was Special Advisor to the Cabinet of Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi on international monetary issues, and a professor at the graduate school of economics at Hitotsubashi University in Tokyo. Mr. Kuroda was elected President by ADB's Board of Governors and officially assumed office on February 2005.

## **The Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake (2)**

### **Health and the Prevention of Domestic/ Sexual Violence**



**Ms. Reiko Masai**  
Representative,  
Women's Net Kobe

A 1990 report reviewed the impact of the Loma Prieta Earthquake in California on Women. This report entitled "Influence of the Earthquake on Violence against Women" concluded that violence against women can worsen after any large disaster. It also concluded that any relief and restoration programs should include measures to prevent and control violent acts against women and children. Regrettably, Japanese organizations did not have a copy of this report by the time of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake.

#### ● **The Impact of Shelter Life on Women's Health**

According to the results of a survey conducted in December 1995 by the Earthquake Victims' Association 11 months after the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, more women than men experienced worsened health problems. While staying in shelters, where no privacy was secured, women victims had to do most of the household chores and take care of their children and sick/elderly family members. In the post-disaster situation, greater burdens were imposed on women than on men, due to persistent stereotypes about gender roles.

At the women's meetings held in May 1995, I heard many women complain about the absence of privacy at shelters. I particularly remember a remark by a young woman who was sheltering at an elementary school building. Sobbing bitterly, she said, "Whenever I came back to the shelter at night, I felt anger at seeing so many male strangers in the same room with me." At that shelter, both men and women had to use the same toilet. There was nowhere to change clothing, free from men's eyes. Depriving women of the right to privacy is an infringement of human rights. Long-term stays in surroundings without any privacy were extremely stressful, particularly, for women. Moreover, many women experienced great anxiety and fear. Mothers were forced to soothe their crying babies in the cold outdoors to prevent their crying children from disturbing other victims. As there were no nursing rooms, mothers also breastfed their babies outdoors. Moreover, many mothers decided not to live in shelters because of such a harsh environment. Since many women were suffering from menstrual disorders, cystitis and vaginitis, I wished there were clinics for women, preferably with midwives. If this was impossible, at least, a woman leader should have been appointed in each shelter. I now believe that in post-disaster situations women should participate in the operation of shelters and layout of living spaces within shelters. In preparing relief plans for disaster victims, gender-sensitive viewpoints should be incorporated in both shelter operation and designs as well the stockpiling of relief materials.

#### ● **Insufficient Support for Pregnant Women and Mothers with Infants**

Because of the shattered transport infrastructure,

many companies accommodated their workers in nearby hotels, while their wives had to remain in the affected areas. As a result, many wives were left alone, some with their infants and others with their elderly parents, while their husbands moved to hotels near their workplaces. Reportedly, due to their fear of aftershocks that frequently hit the affected area, many panicked women abused their children. Pregnant women and women immediately after delivery who continued staying in their own houses were particularly vulnerable. Without easy access to professional help, daily necessities and information, many women developed fatigue, anxiety and a sense of loneliness, particularly, when their husbands were either far away or not cooperative. It is truly deplorable that women who absolutely needed care were regarded and treated as care providers instead of care recipients.

#### ● **Disasters and Violent Actions against Women**

Women's Net Kobe established a women's hotline immediately after the earthquake. Of the consultations we offered to women victims, 60% concerned domestic violence against women. One woman caller stated "My house collapsed completely, yet we have to continue paying the housing loan for ten more years. My husband beat me even in the presence of our three-year-old daughter." Another woman said, "I am eight months pregnant. Yet, my husband beats me, shouting that he doesn't want any more children." As an increasing number of women learned about the hotline, we received more and more calls.

For several months after the earthquake, Kobe's streets had no electricity. On dark streets with so many empty, collapsed buildings, many women were raped. In July 1995, we held an assembly with the slogan "We will never forgive sexual violence." To this assembly, we invited women lawyers and public nurses who served at many shelters. Many women victims were forced to stay silent because they had no other option but to remain where they were (such as shelters or temporary housing). Given such an emergency situation, many communities tended to pretend that there were no rapes or any other sexual crimes.

During the High-Level Intergovernmental Meeting on Beijing+10 held in New York, February 2005, participants sought solutions to infringements of women's human rights, particularly sexual violence, in areas hit by disaster or involved in conflict. In Japan, we must also seek effective solutions by incorporating post-disaster programs gender-sensitive viewpoints, especially measures to prevent violence against women. At the same time in non-emergencies, we should work to develop measures for the prevention of domestic violence and the creation of systems to support women victims. Above all, we must foster an environment where the victims of sexual violence can easily report the criminal acts without risk.

# Kitakyushu Residents' Environmental Forum

~ Toward Creating a World Capital City of Environmental Movements ~



Ms. Maathai (center) and Mayor Sueyoshi (right) during their presentations. Ms. Misumi (left), president of the KFAW, served as coordinator.

Organizers : Kitakyushu Ecolife-Stage Executive Committee,  
Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women (KFAW);  
Cooperation : Kitakyushu City, The Mainichi Newspapers;  
Sponsor : Kitakyushu City Board of Education

On Sunday, February 19, 2006, the Kitakyushu Residents' Environmental Forum was held at Wakamatsu Citizen's Hall, on the theme "Toward Creating a World Capital City of Environmental Movements." At this Forum, we were pleased to have the presence of Ms. Wangari Maathai, Assistant Minister of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources of Kenya. Other participants included Mr. Koichi Sueyoshi, mayor of Kitakyushu, who seeks to develop the City into a world capital city of environmental movements; and Ms. Yoshiko Misumi, the president of the KFAW, an organization that has been committed to environmental movements from gender-sensitive perspectives. As the Forum's coordinator, Ms. Misumi chaired discussions engaged in by Ms. Maathai and other participants. Together with the audience members, the Forum participants considered environmental problems from the perspective of three key phrases: the Greenbelt Movement, "Mottainai" and the World Capital City of Environmental Movements. Since 1977 Ms. Maathai has been leading the Greenbelt Movement, under which she promotes the planting of trees, particularly among women in farming villages. The movement not only fosters environmental preservation, but also women's economic independence, providing many women with perspectives on how to overcome poverty. In recognition of Ms. Maathai's great contribution to "sustainable development, democracy and peace," she was honored with a Nobel Peace Prize in 2004. She was the first recipient of the Prize in the field of the environment.

## Women's Collaboration and the Spread of the "Greenbelt Movement"

In Kenya, many women had difficulties satisfying such basic needs as clean water and firewood for cooking. Considering this a great challenge, Ms. Maathai commenced a tree-planting campaign. She believed that by planting trees, women could gain firewood while preventing soil erosion. By selling seedlings, women can gain income. Moreover, trees can fertilize the land, where women can grow crops. When she initiated the Greenbelt Movement, many women were reluctant to join because of lack of confidence in their abilities. Ms. Maathai encouraged women who were worried about their lack of education, saying, "Trust in your own intuition. Women's intuition is most rational and logical." By encouraging many women to overcome various obstacles and social barriers, Ms. Maathai helped their empowerment and integration into the mainstream of their societies.

Helping one another, women gradually learned skills in forestry management. Seeing seedlings grow into trees, with burgeoning fresh leaves, women realized that they could fulfill their tasks. In this way, many women developed self-confidence. Ms. Maathai repeatedly told these women that even if they failed time and again, they should not give up. Instead, they should continue their efforts to spread the movement.

After planting trees, women had to confirm whether or not the trees were growing steadily. Since it was difficult to manage forests that were over five kilometers from their homes, Ms. Maathai organized many women's groups. This in turn resulted in spreading the campaign across the country. The Greenbelt Movement also helped restore local communities.

Many men, who were at first reluctant to join this movement, began to plant trees. They learned that forested land is valued highly and can sell at higher

prices. Moreover, many women went to schools to teach schoolchildren how to plant seedlings. Through the Greenbelt Movement, women learned about many issues related to education, environment and their own empowerment. At the same time, "Getting the government to support the campaign was the most challenging," Ms. Maathai said. "However, women eventually made the government pay attention to their movements," she continued.

### **"Mottainai," a Message to Restore our Environment**

When Ms. Maathai received the first Nobel Peace Prize for environmentalists, she stated she felt a great deal of responsibility. While pondering how she could impart her message to the world, Ms. Maathai happened to learn a Japanese term, "Mottainai." This single term, she believes contains the spirit of all the three Rs, namely, Reuse, Reduce and Recycle. This term represents a concept that has been fostered in Japanese traditional culture and lifestyle. It can be shared by peoples of various other cultures since it embraces solutions to a wide variety of problems. Although many Japanese people in the present-day affluent society have nearly forgotten this term, Ms. Maathai reminded them of it. Traveling around the world, Ms. Maathai saw many people, both poor and wealthy, taking care of trees and protecting their local environment in their own ways. She firmly believes that people can achieve the targets stipulated in the Kyoto Protocol and can realize sustainable environment through their grass roots commitment. By promoting the concept of "Mottainai," she hopes to further promote grass roots activities.

### **Creating a Sustainable Society and the World Capital City of Environmental Movements**

In the 1960s, Kitakyushu City was developing as one of Japan's heavy industrial centers which supported our country's high economic growth. At that time, residents regarded the smoke rising from factory chimneys as a symbol of the City's thriving industry. However, despite the flourishing economy, the urban environment began to deteriorate. In addition to the smoggy gray sky, Dokai Bay became so polluted that it was called the "death sea." Environmental campaigns in Kitakyushu City were initiated in the form of measures taken against such serious pollution. To overcome the problem, enterprises, local governments, researchers and citizens made concerted efforts. Of the various groups involved, a



Ms. Maathai watered Japanese oak seedlings together with representatives of Kitakyushu residents to promote the greening of the region and help prevent global warming.

women's group, led by mothers, was particularly enthusiastic in fighting against pollution problems. A women's campaign, entitled "We want our Blue Skies Back," eventually led Kitakyushu City's environmental movement to develop into a global environmental preservation movement, transcending the city's boundaries. Citizens of Kitakyushu have been endeavoring to preserve the precious natural environment for future generations. Recognizing that regional development projects should not destroy the environment, residents of Kitakyushu have worked to make development projects sustainable. Their commitment has been of great significance, matching that of the Greenbelt Movement led by Ms. Maathai.

Mayor Sueyoshi stated that to tackle environmental challenges on a global basis, it is essential to study and clarify basic visions and concepts, and to promote global movements, involving people worldwide. The Mayor announced, while taking advantage of Kitakyushu's previous experience in overcoming pollution, the city will continue its efforts to make itself the most friendly in the world to both residents and ecosystems. He emphasized that, together with its residents, the Kitakyushu will pursue its program to develop into the "World Capital City of Environmental Movements."

As the coordinator, President Misumi of the KFAW concluded the Forum by stating that residents of Kitakyushu should work together to create a sustainable society, seeking an optimal balance between environmental protection, social development and economic growth. A sustainable society, she also emphasized, fosters the synergy of healthy economy and sound environment. It also ensures peace, protection of human rights and gender equality.



# Study Tour in India



## Purpose of the Study Tour

The 21st century has been dubbed the “century of Asia” and the “century of human rights.” With this in mind, KFAW planned a study tour to India on the theme “Pondering the Human Rights of Women and Children in India.” We publicized the tour plan in the City’s bulletin to invite women residents of Kitakyushu who are interested in women and children’s issues in India. As a result, a total of eight women participated in the study tour, which lasted eight days from January 16 to 23, 2006.

Even among the thriving Asian economies, India records a particularly outstanding economic growth rate. During our visit to India, we visited three NGOs and held meetings between representatives of Indian women’s groups and KFAW members.

## Details of the Study Tour

### ● Visiting Three NGOs

**ApneAap:** This NGO assists women victims of human trafficking who were forced to engage in prostitution. The NGO also helps the children of such women. Using closed school buildings, the NGO members provide the children with education; assist the mothers with finding jobs; offer various other services related to women’s health and livelihood and support victims’ efforts to lead independent lives. One of the tour members, who works at a day nursery in Japan, took along Japanese *kamishibai*, or picture cards for storytelling. Showing the children the picture cards, she told them the stories in English. The Indian children, who had never seen such picture cards, were eager to listen to the stories. We also taught the children how to fold paper cranes and make paper cutouts. I hope that the children enjoyed learning about such Japanese arts.

**SPARC:** In India, due to the great income gap between rich and poor, there are many poor people living on the streets. In this environment, SPARC encourages the poor to save money to build houses for themselves. At the same time, the NGO offers low-interest loan service for poor women. In addition, SPARC offers various other community-based services, based on thorough discussions with local people about diverse problems facing



respective communities. To our great surprise, the NGO has a large membership of 100,000 in India.

**INDCARE:** To protect the residential rights of women living in slums, this NGO assists such women in fighting against unfair demands by the government to leave their areas. In addition, the NGO offers them various services relating to education, healthcare and livelihood, and works to make their living environment women-friendly. The NGO also operates various businesses, including meal services. We visited one INDCARE facility that provides school lunch to 70,000 students in New Delhi. By operating a meal service business, INDCARE offers poor women job opportunities. Adjacent to the facility, there is a day nursery that enables mothers to work and thus seek economic independence. I was particularly impressed to learn that each member of INDCARE has a strong sense of self-help, which I believe is attributable to various activities of the Self Help Group in India. We saw many poor women fighting poverty and other obstacles with firm resolution. They also have deep trust in Ms. Reeva Sood, an extraordinary leader of INDCARE, who continuously inspires such women. The poor women’s power, I believe, attests to the energy and dynamism of the Indian people, who underpin India’s thriving economy.

### ● Discussion Meetings

In Mumbai and New Delhi, we held discussion meetings with local women who are active in various circles. Talking with women entrepreneurs, reporters, teachers and staff members of NGOs, we found that we shared many common aspects which evoked deep mutual empathy.

## Impressions of the Tour

Throughout the tour, I was overwhelmed by the power of Indian women, who despite harsh conditions, are finding their own life paths through solidarity with other women. India is indeed a great power, where both modern and traditional aspects, including the persistent caste system, intermingle. Presently, it is experiencing amazing economic growth. Moreover, it has a population of 1.1 billion. Throughout the eight days of the study tour, I was fascinated by the boundless power and immeasurable potential of the Indian people. After the tour I was even more confident that India will increase its presence in Asia.



▲Study Tour participants reading and instructing local children in Mumbai.

# Participating in the 50th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

Dr. Hiroko Hara, Chair, Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women



▲The Asian Pacific Caucus, February 27, 2006

The 50th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) was held at UN Headquarters from February 27 to March 10, 2006. On behalf of the Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women (KFAW), I participated in the session, as well as an NGO consultation, held at the New York University on February 26, the day before the opening of the CSW session. During my days in New York, I was involved in various activities as a representative of an NGO in the Asia-Pacific region. I was pleased and encouraged when Ms. Taeko Misumi came from KFAW on February 27 to work with me until March 4.

A total of 45 countries dispatched delegations to the 50th session of the CSW, namely 13 countries from Africa; 11 from Asia; nine from the Latin America and Caribbean region; four from Eastern Europe as well as eight from Western Europe and the rest of the world.

A chairperson for each CSW session was selected from one of the five regions on a rotating basis. For this 50th session, H.E. Ms. Carmen Maria Gallardo (El Salvador) was appointed from the Latin America and Caribbean region. Four vice chairpersons were respectively selected from the remaining four regions-Nigeria, Hungary, the United Kingdom and Indonesia.

The 50th session discussions focused on the following two themes: (1) Enhanced participation of women in development: an enabling environment for achieving gender equality and the advancement of women, taking into account, inter alia, the fields of education, health and work; and (2) Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels. Based on discussions on

these themes, agreed conclusions were compiled, the details of which are available on the UN website on CSW (<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/50sess.htm>). In addition, six resolutions were adopted (See Table 1).

The Japanese delegation comprised Ambassador Shinichi Kitaoka, Japan's representative to the UN; Dr. Yoriko Meguro, representative of the Japanese delegation and professor at Sophia University; staff members of various governmental offices (including the ministries of Foreign Affairs; Health, Labour and Welfare; Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology; Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries; and the Cabinet Office) and Ms. Kei Fusano, advisor to the delegation. On the afternoon of the third day of the session (March 1), Dr. Meguro on behalf of the Japanese government, gave a presentation for which she won great applause.

NGO activities were less vigorous than they were at the 49th session held in 2005. Nevertheless many workshops and symposiums were held daily on a wide variety of themes. As in previous years, before the opening of the UN session, an orientation for NGO members was held (February 26). Audience members were also given ample opportunity to ask questions and express their views. I stated that rather than merely increasing the number of women participating in decision-making processes, it is more important to ensure the participation of both women and men who are truly enthusiastic about raising women's status.

From February 27 to March 10, many side events were held at Church Center and at nearby hotels. On March 7, for instance, the Asia Pacific Women's Watch (APWW) held a workshop on potential obstacles that could hinder women's participation in decision-making processes. I reported on Japan's situation and problems. Moreover, as a member of the secretariat of the Asia Pacific Caucus, that was held everyday during the session, Ms. Misumi, other members and I were extremely busy. I am proud to say that the Asia Pacific Caucus was very active. In addition, the statements it presented during the plenary session gained keen attention from many participants.

Table 1 Resolutions adopted at the 50th Session of the CSW

- Release of women and children taken hostage, including those subsequently imprisoned, in armed conflicts
- Women, the girl child and HIV/AIDS
- Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan
- Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women
- Advisability of the appointment of a special rapporteur on laws that discriminate against women
- Future organization and methods of work of the Commission on the Status of Women



▲UN Convention Hall on Women's Day, March 8, 2006

### WEAVE's Health Internship for Women's Capacity Building

**Ms. Subadhra Devi Rai (Thailand)**

WEAVE (Women Education Advancement and Empowerment), founded in 1990, believes that building on women's existing health knowledge and skills is a good way to address women's health concerns, build their capacity and promote their rights. The health work at WEAVE has predominantly focused on the identification and the publication of educational health materials in various ethnic languages of Burma.

The health internship is a new component of the WEAVE health programme. The three month internship presents an opportunity for women to learn the process of identifying health issues in their community; how these health issues affect their community and women and what are some strategies to address health concerns. The goal of the internship is to train individuals in the process of developing health educational materials.

Ultimately WEAVE hopes that its health internship would provide women with more than health knowledge. WEAVE's aim is to provide women a platform to voice their concerns about health and explore strategies that would strengthen the work of their CBOs. WEAVE wants women to understand that well-being is not just a consumer good but is also a political statement. In this regard, the cooperation of ethnic CBOs is critical.

The health internship may not be able to address all the health issues of displaced women. However, it is a first step for women to be informed about health and be in a position to determine the type of health services appropriate for their community. The health internship is also an attempt to teach women to view health within a holistic paradigm, one which allows for exploring health using a multisectoral framework. This means moving beyond the biomedical point of view and understanding that good health and adequate health services is a basic human right. This is a challenge because curative health continues to dominate the health worldview of displaced persons.

Please read more about WEAVE's activities at [http://www.kfaw.or.jp/english/15th\\_report01.html#03](http://www.kfaw.or.jp/english/15th_report01.html#03)

### Working Women—a Marginal Income Group

**Mr. Kazi Shamsul Alam (Bangladesh)**

Many of the working women, living below the poverty level, resort to manual labour for their survival. They work on building construction and road construction sites. However, women suffer from wage discrimination. Moreover, the distribution of wealth does not help the poor but instead subjects them to exploitation. There are also various circumstances encountered by this class of women which force them to engage in such odd jobs. The reasons are many. There is lack of equal gender opportunity due to the bohemian social structure. Consequently, women fall prey easily to injustice. For example, a Mass Line Media Centre report cited that a total of 2,052 human rights incidents have occurred since April 2005. The incidents also include the violation of women, namely, sexual harassment, dowry issues, acid throwing, kidnapping, human trafficking etc. Major contributing factors were the marginal income group's unemployment as well as lack of education. Though some NGOs are working for the rehabilitation of women through self employment programmes, these initiatives are insufficient.

Another contributing factor is the population boom. The government with the help of donor countries and the United Nations Organization has taken adequate steps to address the problem. Our achievement in this field is also praiseworthy. Unfortunately, the birth rate in the low income group is still very high. The lack of education is the prime cause. Adult education programmes are needed today.

Women should have equal access in every sphere. Most of these women do not possess any property which enables them to get bank credit. The government should have some programme other than food for works programme. In this way, women are encouraged to engage in self employment. The government has already created some programmes like goat farming and small dairy projects etc. In reality, however the benefits are not going to the women but rather to middlemen. In the future, a joint collaboration between the government, NGOs, UN bodies, donor countries and local elites will bring fruitful results.



▲Women working at a road construction site

## Philippine Local News Media Portrayal of Women in Prostitution

**Ms. Nharleen Santos Millar (Philippines)**

Prostituted women resort to the “flesh trade” because of poverty and exploitation. Most if not all of these women are poor and have been trafficked from the provinces to Metro Manila by pimps and even worse, their own relatives. Most work in karaoke bars, massage parlors and or prostitution houses. The human rights of these women are vehemently violated while pimps and bar owners earn from the lucrative sex trade. In addition, it is during acts of prostitution that women are exposed to other human rights violations, such as, rape, battery and murder, among others.

The establishments where these prostituted women and children work are usual targets of surveillance by law enforcement agencies. Commonly, prime time news on local Philippine television feature law enforcement efforts to curb illegal activities among establishments, such as, bars, discos and saunas. At the same time, local media networks pounce on the vulnerability of these women in an attempt to make the coverage media worthy. A framework to understand the system of prostitution was presented in the Philippine Plan for Gender-responsive Development (PPGD 1995-2025) (NCRFW 1995). Based on this plan, the onus of the trade is borne mainly by women who are treated as commodities to be bought and traded. These women also are considered to be criminals under the law. They are seen as the problem to be solved and as sinners to be morally reformed. What is very often neglected in this system are the “buyers” who demand sexual services. This side of the system is often not seen in news coverage of raids and operations conducted by the police.

The insensitive media treatment of the plight of prostituted women further exacerbates the violation of their human rights. As a potent vehicle to bring about reforms in terms of societal treatment of women in prostitution, media practitioners should not portray women in a degrading manner. The Philippine legal system adopted Article 202 of the Revised Penal Code as its anti-prostitution policy. This article stereotypes all prostitutes as women. In addition, women engaged in prostitution have always become the automatic focus of apprehension. This approach neglects the appropriate measures that should be taken against bar owners, the so-called pimps and customers/clients.

In recent years, feminists in government and civil society have been lobbying for the passage of an

Anti-Prostitution Bill in Congress which seeks, among other goals, to decriminalize prostitution and install stiffer penalties for business owners, pimps, traffickers and even clients. This bill treats prostituted women as victims rather than criminals. It also treats them as human beings rather than commodities that “clients” buy. What the bill should also contain are provisions that impose media protocol on the portrayal of prostituted women, particularly, in news coverage. Such protocol should stress the need to avoid sensationalizing prostituted women as well protect their privacy and dignity.

## Foreign Correspondents: Memories of Kitakyushu Visit

Foreign Correspondents visited Kitakyushu city to participate in the *New Energies for Mutual Understanding Program*. You can read the detailed contents of this program in *Asian Breeze* Vol. 46. Below find the comments of the participating correspondents :

**Ms. Kanthi Wijetunge, Sri Lanka**



As a foreign correspondent associated with KFAW for a long time, I am extremely happy that I received this opportunity to share my experiences not only through my formal presentation but also through informal talks with the interested parties I met there. What is greatly appreciated is KFAW's dedication to the development of a strong network among Asian women who are really committed to the promotion of gender equality in their own countries.

**Ms. Nilima Kulkarni, India**



KFAW provides an excellent platform for women across Asian countries in particular and worldwide in general to voice their problems as well as share and exchange experiences about empowerment in their own countries. This program is one of them. Organizations like KFAW are indispensable for the spreading of awareness among today's women who are struggling to achieve empowerment.

KFAW is working increasingly to spread our network worldwide especially to other parts of the Asia Pacific region. We are accepting applications for the 2007-2008 Foreign Correspondents Program. See page 12 (Information) of this *Asian Breeze*. We are looking forward to your participation.



## New Foreign Correspondents

KFAW established the Foreign Correspondents Program as one way to network with mainly Asian Pacific countries. This year 17 possible correspondents applied from 13 countries. We accepted as finalists 9 applicants from 8 countries. This is the fifteenth year of the Foreign Correspondents Program, bringing the number of past and present KFAW correspondents to a total of 218 participants from 33 countries. Through this network, we hope to introduce our readers to the latest news about women primarily in the Asia Pacific Rim.

### Theme : Women and Disaster

The theme of the 2006-2007 Foreign Correspondent Program is "Women and Disaster."

Many natural disaster have recently occurred worldwide including the earthquake off the Coast of Sumatra; the tsunami in the Indian Ocean; the earthquakes in north Pakistan and Iraq; the landslide in the Philippines and the hurricanes in the USA. Not only natural disasters, but also artificial disasters like ethnic conflicts or terrorism are on the rise. These circumstances cause the most damage to women and children because of their social and cultural backgrounds. Relief activities and reconstruction supports, even if their scale is large, can not ensure maximum impact without a gender perspective.

The 2000 UN General Assembly indicated that natural disaster is an obstacle to the total enforcement of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. A gender perspective must be incorporated whenever disaster prevention mitigation and recovery strategies are being developed and implemented to the tackle this relevant challenge. The 2005 Commission on the Status of Women reaffirmed the Beijing Platform for Action. It passed a resolution on integrating a gender perspective in post-disaster relief efforts, particularly in the aftermath of the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster.

Foreign correspondents will report, on what is needed for the integration of gender perspective into countermeasures including aid programs or disaster risk reduction systems. KFAW welcomes correspondents' various viewpoints about "Women and Disaster" in their respective countries.

Nepal



Ms. Prabha Thacker is a representative of MANUSHI which supports the empowerment of women. Specifically, MANUSHI works with women's organizations to facilitate international cultural exchanges and cross cultural learning. Ms. Thacker carries out international research, consulting and education activities.

Pakistan



Ms. Tehreem Hasan Syed provides age 10-17 children educational counseling and academic services at an after school centre. She has a good command over writing in English and writes articles for local newspapers.

## THE FORUM WINDOW

### Enhancing Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Activities

When I searched for "CSR" on the Internet (using yahoo in March 2006), I found that 8.97 million web pages used this term. According to a questionnaire survey conducted by Art Support Fukuoka in June 2005, 80% of the respondents who were working for various companies answered that they knew about CSR, at least to some extent.

In recent years, increasing numbers of enterprises have begun to place priority on fulfilling CSR, in addition to the pursuit of greater corporate profits. This trend is a reaction to the attitudes of many Japanese companies that were once devoted exclusively to the

pursuit of greater profits. In retrospect, from the second half of the 1960's to the first half of the 1970's, many Japanese enterprises were strongly criticized for their anti-social and or anti-ethical behavior. Consequently to reverse Japanese business people image as "economic animals", many Japanese enterprises started to promote corporate citizenship activities. Today, not only large enterprises, but also small and medium enterprises, are committed to activities that support art and cultural events. In addition to such cultural activities, which we call "messena," many Japanese enterprises have begun to consider various other kinds of corporate citizenship activities as essential components of CSR. Individual enterprises are being evaluated in terms of their maturity as public entities. Specifically, this evaluation includes different yardsticks. For example, whether or not the

## Nepal



Ms. Bhawana Upadhyay is an independent consultant. She provides expert advice on women's issues and development including disaster management. The geographical focus of her current research is South Asian countries, such as, Nepal, India and Bangladesh.

## Bangladesh



Ms. Munima Sultana, presently an editorial assistant with the *Financial Express*, published research about management for women journalists and prisoners in Bangladesh. She has attended a number of regional and international seminars/ workshops.

## Thailand



Mr. Hisashi Ogawa is a research student with the faculty of Islam, Prince of Songkhla University. After the tsunami disaster of 2004, he started to investigate its impact from a gender perspective.

## Philippines



Ms. Rita Gatchalian is a Community Affairs Officer IV, Provincial Social Welfare and Development Office. She has been in the service for almost 29 years. She usually acts as resource person/trainer/facilitator/educator for various seminars/workshops/training and focus group discussions.

## Vietnam



Ms. Le Thi was the head officer of an advisory group for the promotion of gender equality in Vietnam until Feb. 2004. She is also researcher on women, gender and family studies. One of her recent publications is "The Life of the Single Women in Vietnam."

## Singapore

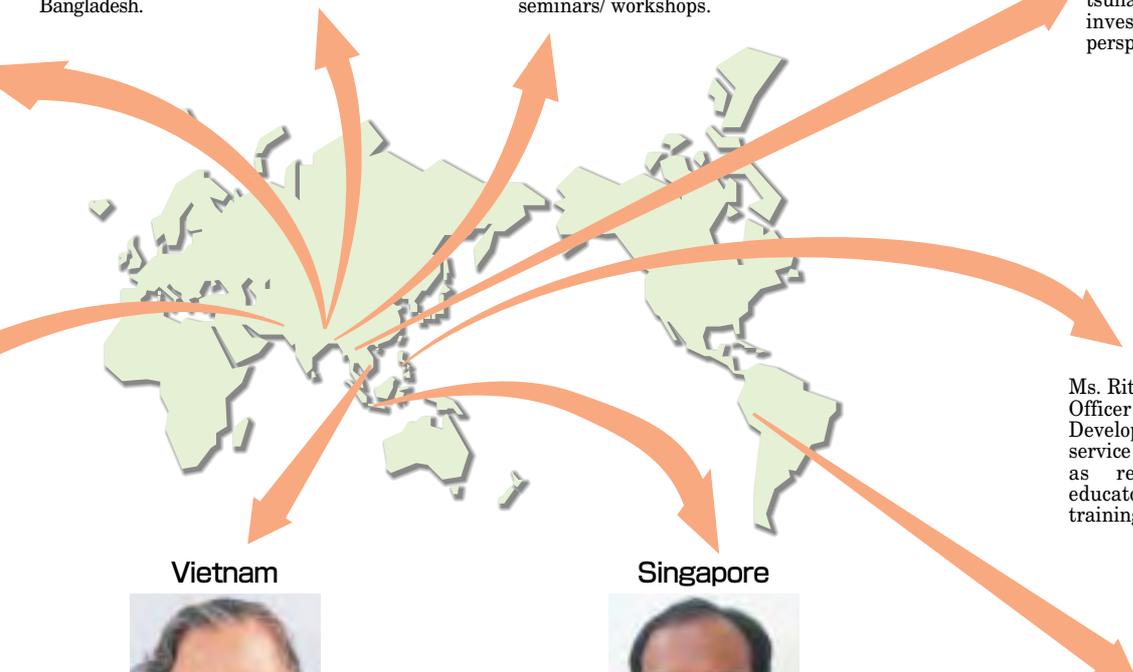


Mr. Fairoz Ahmad is a final year honors student at the National University of Singapore, Department of Sociology and University Scholars Programme. He has been to tsunami devastated Aceh twice. He has commenced a sociological study on the victims of the tsunami for his honors thesis.

## Peru



Ms. Carmen Ledesma is specialist on International Social Agenda and Projects, Ministry of Woman and Social Development (MIMDES). She makes legal recommendations in order to protect women's human rights. Ms. Ledesma also lectures on women's issues including DV and national law for women.



corporation meets the requirements concerning gender equality or whether or not, it maintains appropriate systems to protect workers' human rights, ensure their welfare and satisfy labor standards.

Both the U.N. Millennium Declaration and the Second Basic Plan for Gender Equality, issued by the Gender Equality Bureau of the Japanese Cabinet Office, stipulated that by 2020 enterprises must increase the ratio of women managers to at least 30%. Moreover, the Global Compact (GC), an international initiative proposed in 2000 by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, demands that individual enterprises review their corporate systems in the four areas of human rights, labor standards, environment and anti-corruption.

Because of rapid globalization, which has been stimulated by the development of the IT industry, the en-

tire world has nearly been dominated by the market economy. Globalization has also widened the gap between a handful of rich people and the poor, or the great majority. Women, who are particularly vulnerable to the negative impacts of globalization, comprise the majority of the poor. Moreover, many poor women in developing countries are employed by multinational enterprises as inexpensive labor sources. Thus, I find it particularly meaningful to study labor conditions and training opportunities provided for women workers employed by Japan-based multinational enterprises from a CSR perspective.

Ms. Toshiko Hirata  
Professor, Kyushu Women Junior College  
Visiting Researcher, Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women.

# INFORMATION

## Asian Lifestyles

~Photos from KFAW Readers~

### Side Work (India)



There is a village in Gurgaon, a suburb of Delhi, that is like a ceramic factory. Women and men work together to make ceramics. Passing through this area, I sighted a local woman doing embroidery side work in her doorway. The lavender colored door, the villager's facial expression and green

skirt vividly stood out in the cool air.

Photographer: Ms. Nobuko Uesawa, Tokyo

### COVER PROFILE



#### Ms. Myokei Kawamura

Buddhist monk, Announcer, Flower arrangement artist

Ms. Myokei Kawamura has three different occupations which seem to have nothing to do with each other. But she says, "These are similar in the way they engage my heart and mind. I express myself when I preach the teachings of Buddha; talk on the radio; and do flower arranging." Kawamura delivers lectures all over Japan, does traditional temple works in Kitakyushu and teaches high school students flower arranging in Kyoto. She also posts daily sermons on her website, answers international and domestic e-mail concerning troubles and worries. Her website has 10,000 hits daily. When Kawamura relates a story, she tries to eliminate any generation, nationality and or gender biases. There are very few female monks. Kawamura sometimes feels more advantaged than male monks because women easily talk to her about issues special to women. She is also accessible to anyone because she is far from traditional temple's image. She wants to have a radio sermon program which helps listeners relax and look forward to tomorrow.

## KFAW 2007-2008 RECRUITMENT OF FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS

KFAW is pleased to announce its 2007-2008 recruitment of foreign correspondents for the purpose of expanding KFAW's network with other countries in the Asian Pacific region and collecting overseas information on women's status.

● **Number of recruitment** : nine

● **Qualifications** :

- ① Applicants must live in an Asian Pacific country other than Japan. (However, there is no limitation as to one's nationality or sex)
- ② Applicants must be able to participate for one year and turn in reports (including an application report) three times a year either in Japanese or English.

● **Application** :

Applicants must prepare the following items and submit them to KFAW :

- ① **Report** : up to 1,200 Japanese letters or 700 English

words. Theme : "Women and Community Activity"

② **Application form** : You can download it from our web site.

③ **Photographs** : Photograph/s related to the report with an explanation. Please do not clip the photos in anyway. The photos must be clearly visible. Submitted photos will not be returned. (a photograph/s is absolutely required. Please do not forget to forward it by post or e-mail.)

● **Compensation** : 8,000 yen per report.

● **Deadline date** : Applications posted by or on February 28, 2007 will be accepted.

### Location of Kitakyushu



## 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 Labor. The purpose of the KFAW, through various projects, is to promote the improvement of women's status as well as their mutual understanding and cooperation in Asia.



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