

# Asian Breeze

KITAKYUSHU FORUM ON ASIAN WOMEN JULY 2007

Triannual Publication



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## How Happy is our Planet?



**Nic Marks**  
head of centre for well-being,  
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### ultimate aims, ultimate costs

“There is no wealth but life” wrote John Ruskin deep in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. While this may seem controversial to some, it is almost a truism. What else can be of value to us as humans but our own lives and our own well-being? It doesn't take a rocket scientist to recognise this. Aristotle argued that living and doing well is the highest good. Two millennia later, and the US Declaration of Independence entrenched the pursuit of happiness as a fundamental right for all citizens. When surveyed, people across the world echo these philosophical positions? the happiness and health of them and their families consistently ranks as more important than religion, status and, by a long way, wealth.

So, if well-being is the ultimate aim of society, what is the ultimate cost in achieving this aim? What is the fundamental input, without which there would be no well-being, for all the right-thinking? Clearly, it is the planet we all live on and its finite resources. With the environment at a tipping point and many resources rapidly becoming scarcer, human well-being has to be pursued whilst simultaneously being mindful of the consumption of the Earth's resources that it often implies.

However, Western society for the last 70 years has measured success, not by well-being, nor by its ability to live within environmental limits, but by the rise and fall of GDP, with the implicit assumption that wealth correlates somehow with well-being. This has proved to be ill-advised for two reasons. Firstly we now know that economic conditions are only a small aspect of overall well-being, and secondly that the two do not rise in tandem? economic circumstances are very important to those in absolute poverty but less so once a threshold of material sufficiency has been achieved.

### a completely new indicator

Combining the aims of environmental sustainability and human well-being into one of sustainable, equitable, well-being intuitively makes sense. This is the explicit aim of the Happy Planet Index (HPI) developed by the centre for well-being at nef (the new economics foundation) and launched in July 2006 to much global media attention. Conceptually, the HPI is an efficiency measure.

$$\text{HPI} = \frac{\text{Life Satisfaction index} \times \text{Life Expectancy index}}{\text{Ecological Footprint index}}$$

It measures the ecological efficiency with which, country by country, people achieve long and happy lives. In doing so, it is the first indicator that strips our view of the economy back to its absolute basics: what goes in (natural resources) and what comes out (human lives of different lengths and happiness).

### a long way to go

The results tell a depressing story. No country can truly be regarded as successful. When achievable targets are set for each component of the HPI, no country is able to reach all three. Either well-being is less than ideal. Or, in those countries enjoying high levels of well-being, the cost to the environment is too great - the country is living beyond its fair share of the planet's resources.

The Happy Planet Index is potentially a map for a new type of progress towards achieving sustainable well-being. However, like any tool, the HPI is not foolproof. For example, the ecological footprint is only a proxy for environmental impact and misses out some very serious failures of sustainability such as soil erosion. Nevertheless, at nef we believe it is important to measure what matters, not just what it is easiest to measure. The HPI is our attempt to move policy makers in that direction. As the component data improve, so too will the HPI, allowing us to paint a better picture of what sustainable well-being could look like. For one thing, it is clear that Western growth-based economies are not the way forward. The countries that fare best are typically those that have not fallen completely foul to the full-scale obsession with material consumption that the West has, but that have reasonable standards of living and sometimes even better health than many 'economically developed' countries. They are countries that have maintained their traditions, their social capital, their strong family bonds, and their *joie de vivre* (or perhaps '*alegría*'), and that have an appreciation for the natural beauty that surrounds them. If we are to take sustainable well-being seriously, it is to these examples that we must look.

### Profile

He has a degree in Management Studies from Cambridge University, a Master's degree in Operational Research from Lancaster University and a postgraduate diploma in Change Agent Skills and Strategies from the Human Potential Research Group at the University of Surrey. He is also a qualified psychotherapist and a member of the International Society for Quality of Life Studies - ISQOLS.

You can find out more about the Happy Planet Index, and even calculate your own personal HPI score at: <http://www.happyplanetindex.org/>

## **Population and Gender (2)**

### **Mortality and Gender in Developing Countries**



**Makoto Atoh**  
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If male and female children are treated equally, mortality rates of male infants (below one year old) and little boys (ages one to five) are generally higher than those of female infants and little girls of the same age. Scientists explain that this is because male infants are biologically and genetically weaker than female infants, as are male perinates (infants in perinatal period: from 22 weeks of gestation to one week after birth). Regarding children aged from one to five, boys, more vulnerable to infectious diseases, are also more prone to be involved in accidents.

Studies of sex differentials in infant mortality rates in developing countries show that during the 1970s and 1980s, with a few exceptions, the mortality rates of male infants were higher than those of female infants in most countries. On the other hand, mortality rates of small children showed different trends. In South America, the Caribbean, Sub-Saharan Africa, and East and Southeast Asia, boys' mortality rates generally surpassed those of girls. On the other hand, in China, South Asia, West Asia, and North Africa, girls' mortality rates generally exceeded those of boys. Because of this, the latter regions are sometimes called the "excess female mortality belt."

Since the 1970s, infant mortality rates have declined in all developing countries. Concerning this trend, excess female mortality rates also started to improve globally. The exceptions are China and South Asia, where excess female mortality rates remain outstanding. According to UNFPA's State of World Population 2006, under-five mortality (five who children die per 1,000 babies born alive) were as follows: Africa-boys (155) and girls (143); Latin America and the Caribbean-boys (33) and girls (27). In Asia, however, the rate for boys (64), and for girls (66). The higher mortality rate for girls is attributable primarily to excess female mortality rates in the two most populous countries in the world: China-boys (30) and girls (41) and India-boys (84) and girls (88).

Such excess female mortality in these countries is attributable to the different treatment of boys versus girls in those societies, or more strictly speaking, to the discrimination of girls. It is commonly believed that girls are discriminated against especially regarding dietary habits and medical treatment. Although it is highly likely that girls are given less nu-

tritious food than boys are, there is no definite data that supports this assumption. On the other hand, there is data definitely showing that boys are better treated regarding medical treatment. In South Asia, more boys receive preventive vaccinations. Moreover, fewer girls than boys are taken to clinics when they have fever or diarrhea.

What are the causes of such discriminatory treatment against girls concerning health care including medical treatment? Despite religious differences, all countries in the so-called excess female mortality belt feature strong patriarchal systems. Under these systems, men, who succeed family lines, control all family members' behaviors. Whereas men, being the heads of families, are basically engaged in one or another type of occupation to earn a living, fewer women support their families' livelihoods. Instead, women are expected to dedicate themselves to housework, childbearing and raising children. Given this situation, many families tend to prefer the birth of boys. When resources are scarce, many families provide what little resources are available to boys rather than girls.

In northern India and other regions, where there is a custom of offering a large dowry from the bride's family to the groom's family, girls are even more discriminated against. The custom of giving a dowry indeed is one major cause of excess female mortality rates. In some Indian states, however, the mortality rate for girls is lower than that of boys. Girls born in Kerala enjoy the lowest mortality rate in India, due to the relatively high women's social status in the state. This status is attributable to the matriarchal family systems in that region. In China, since the majority of Chinese people desire to maintain family lines, they would rather have a boy than a girl under the current One-Child Family Policy. This tendency of preferring boys often results in sex-selective abortions, contributing to a lower birthrate for females. This, combined with mistreatment of little girls, is believed to result in an excess female mortality in the country. In conclusion, excess female deaths attest to serious gender discrimination that appears in vital statistics.

# Participating in the 51<sup>st</sup> Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women

Hiroko Hara (KFAW Advisor)

Masako Ota (KFAW Senior Researcher)

The 51<sup>st</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW51) was held at the United Nations (UN) Headquarters in New York between February 26 and March 9, 2007. A total of 1,927 representatives from 234 NGOs from around the world participated in the session. The theme of the CSW51 was Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination and Violence against the Girl Child. Violence against girls and women comprises physical, sexual and psychological violence, committed at home and in society. Violent acts include beating, rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, human trafficking, forced prostitution and traditional practices that negatively affect girls and women. Since girls (below 18 years old according to the UN definition) are particularly vulnerable to such violent acts, special attention needs to be paid to protecting them.

One of the highlights of the 51<sup>st</sup> session was that many girl representatives from all over the world came to New York. Unfortunately, there was no Japanese girl representative. On March 2, the meeting titled "Girls Speak Out" was held at the UN Headquarters, where seven girls representing seven countries made statements on their



March 2: "Girls Speak Out"  
(at the UN Headquarters)

own experiences and the general situations of girls in their respective countries. Various workshops in which girls played major roles were also organized during the two-week session.

## High-level Roundtables (inter-governmental meetings)

The High-level Roundtables means meetings where the representatives of the 45 member states of the CSW make statements and discuss relevant issues. Dr. Yoriko Meguro, as the representative of the Japanese government's delegates, made statements about its national and international initiatives concerning violence and discrimination against girls.

The agreed conclusions of the CSW51 reaffirm the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, along with other international conventions and declarations on girls and women. These conclusions, which present the norms and policies on discrimination and violence against girls, urge UN member states to take action under various themes including poverty, education and training, gender stereotypes, health, HIV/AIDS, empowering girls and participation of girls. In addition to the agreed conclusions, four resolutions were adopted, such as, forced and early marriage.

## Parallel Events Organized by NGOs

"NGO Consultation: CSW at 51: Making Girls Visible" was held by the NGO Committee on the Status of Women, New York on February 25, prior to the official opening of

the CSW51. From the following day to the end of the 51<sup>st</sup> session, NGOs from around the world organized many workshops as parallel events. Hiroko Hara, Advisor of KFAW, is Convenor of Japan Women's Watch (JAWW) which is one of the members of Asia Pacific Women's Watch (APWW). APWW, a network of NGOs, monitors the progress on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the Asia-Pacific region. APWW held meetings almost everyday during the two weeks and also organized a workshop, "Violence against Girls – Stopping the Scourge" on February 27. Around 80 participants engaged in lively discussions on the topic.

## NGO Activities

The NGOs from all over the world, including APWW, JAWW, KFAW and other Japanese NGOs, discussed strategies for lobbying UN agencies and government delegates by organizing workshops as well as thematic and regional caucuses. They were trying hard to make agreed conclusions more concrete and effective for the elimination of discrimination and violence against girls. They also emphasized the importance of strengthening the UN gender structure and securing sufficient funds in each and every UN body. As one of the lobbying strategies, the NGO Linkage Caucus presented a letter of request for UN reform to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and government delegates at the event celebrating International Women's Day on March 8. At the end of the CSW51, the NGOs decided to maintain close contacts and work together for the promotion of UN reform in favour of girls and women.

KFAW has participated in CSW sessions and been actively involved in the activities mentioned above since its foundation. Thus, we have made contribution to the enhancement of women's status and the empowerment of women, as well as established the extensive network of NGOs and people worldwide. KFAW will continue working for women and the vulnerable.

### Please visit the following websites for more information.

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/51sess.htm#documents> (the official documents issued by the United Nations on the CSW51)

<http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/speech/un2007/un0702-6.html> (the statement by Dr. Yoriko Meguro, representative of Japan)



February 27  
"Violence against Girls – Stopping the Scourge"  
(at Church Center)

Hiroko Hara retired as the Chair of KFAW on March 31, 2007.



# Australia – Study Tour



## ■ Study Tour Purpose

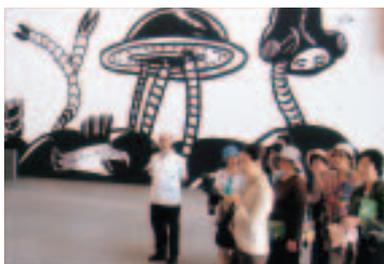
Australia, located almost due south of Japan, is a single country spread across a vast continent. Besides its traditional Aboriginal culture, which has long maintained deep and close relations with nature, Australia also became a country of immigrants with diverse multicultural backgrounds. From March 1 to 8, as participants of this study tour, we visited Brisbane and Noosa in Queensland as well as Boggabilla and Sydney in New South Wales to learn more about the three themes described below.

### Theme 1: Urban Development through Effective Use of Arts

In Brisbane, we visited the Queensland College of Art. Since the 1990s, Queensland's state government has been allocating 2% of its public facility construction budget to the installation of art objects. As a result, many artists have become involved in construction projects. Besides the enhancement of urban landscapes, the City's utilization of the arts in urban development is aimed at promoting employment; activating the local economy; fostering culture and improving multi-cultural understanding among citizens. All of these measures then contribute to greater social stability. In short, the use of art objects in urban development is part of an original policy implemented by the State of Queensland. Through this commitment, Queensland aims to vitalize communities; enrich residents' daily lives; and foster warm relationships among residents. We were deeply impressed with the many works of modern art which were organically integrated into the urban landscape around Brisbane.

### Theme 2: Domestic Violence

In Noosa, a center on the Sunshine Coast of Queensland, we studied various initiatives that have been introduced to aid victims of domestic violence. Noosa has three temporary shelters, called Safe Houses, in the vicinity of police stations. Financial aid is provided to DV victims staying at these shelters. We learned that many Aborigines who move into the city are tormented by a sense of having lost their own identity. Consequently, an unfocused anger and lack of self-confidence often drives Aboriginal men toward acts of violence against women and children. Although the situations affecting Aborigines and Japanese men are different, it is common that men who lack self-confidence vent their frustrations on the more vulnerable women. Moreover, Aboriginal men, women and children suffer discrimination from general society.



▲Gallery of Modern Art in Brisbane



▲Cultural exchange with Aborigines

### Theme 3: Aboriginal Women's Empowerment and Their Human Rights

From Noosa, it was about 7 hour drive southwest to Boggabilla, where we visited Euraba Paper Company. This handmade paper mill was established by Aboriginal women to achieve their economic independence. Since this area is a production center for cotton, women workers use cotton waste as a primary material to produce simple handmade paper. This paper has a different tactile quality from that of Japanese mulberry paper. The Aboriginal women founded the mill with support from both public and private sectors. They have continued the operation of the paper mill with the cooperation from the nearby cotton mill. More recently, with technical instruction from artists, the women have also successfully commercialized their products as artworks. As an example of the best practice of women's business in this region, the women papermakers won the Australian Prime Minister's Award in 2000.

## ■ Tour Impressions

When we visited the Aboriginal women, they seemed at first to be puzzled over what to do with us. We were the first Japanese they had ever encountered. After we demonstrated tea ceremony procedures as well as how to fold paper cranes and other items, however, they became more relaxed and friendly with us. Eventually, they allowed us to try our hands at a papermaking process at the mill.

During this study tour, we were able to experience the grandeur of Australia's natural environment and its geographical scale. We also met some extremely generous and charming people. Today, relations between Japan and Australia are strengthening in trade and various other areas. Through this study tour, we were able to learn about other aspects of Australia that are unknown to the majority of Japanese people.



▲Noosa Regional Art Gallery

# Seminar on Gender Perspective in Environment and Development

## Outline

The Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women, entrusted by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), annually organizes the Seminar on Gender Perspective in Environment and Development.

The purposes of this Seminar are to deepen participants' understanding of women's roles in environmental protection and sustainable development; provide participants with basic knowledge necessary for reforming their countries' systems from gender-sensitive perspectives; develop participants' skills in resolving women's problems; foster participants' ability to effectively carry out environment and development related initiatives from the standpoint of government or NGOs; promote participants' understanding of the importance of environmental including sustainable development education, and enhance participants' capacity as leaders of various related projects.

## Participants

This year's seminar, the 12th in the series, was held from January 29 to March 6, 2007, with a total of nine participants from the following nine countries: Bangladesh, China, Iran, Mali, Paraguay, Peru, the Philippines, Syria and Zimbabwe. The participants were governmental officials responsible for environmental problems and women's issues; NGO staff members as well as university faculty members from various academic fields.

## Seminar Programs

The Seminar, held primarily at JICA Kyushu, comprised lectures and workshops on environment, development and women's issues. Japanese governmental officials, professors and members of NGOs and other volunteer groups held classes, using various techniques, including workshop and activity techniques. Participants engaged in field visits as well as listened to local people's experiences and perspectives.



Training session held at Kitakyushu Environment Museum



Participants at Nagano Green Space



At Water Quality Research Laboratory

## Individual Programs

In the classes on "introduction of gender issues" and "development education," participants held role-play discussions, each speaking on behalf of a story character.

The Seminar also included lectures concerning Kitakyushu City. As one of the Japan's leading industrial cities, Kitakyushu once suffered from serious environmental pollution. Among the lecturers was a woman leader of an activity to combat that pollution. She introduced her own grassroots experiences related to that struggle. In addition, the "environment supporters," who are committed to environmental education at Kitakyushu Environment Museum, explained about their educational activities. This was useful for participants seeking to introduce environmental education activities in their own countries.

The Seminar programs were also held in Tokyo, Hiroshima and Minamata (Kumamoto Prefecture). In Hiroshima and Minamata, participants listened to an atomic bomb victim and to a Minamata disease patient respectively. This disease, a neuropathy, afflicts people who have eaten fish contaminated by methylmercury. Both speakers hoped that they would be the last ones in the

world to experience such tragedies. Their speeches were very impressive to all the participants.

### Country Report and Action Plan Presentation Meeting

During the seminar period, all participants prepared feasible action plans pertaining to themes of their own choice. They will carry out these plans in their own workplaces after returning home. The participants gave presentations on their action plans at the Country Report and Action Plan Presentation Meeting, held at the end of the Seminar. Local residents, invited to attend this meeting, voted for the plan they supported the most. This kind of initiative was a first for this seminar series. The action plan introduced by Ms. Victoria Vilma Blanco Zamalloa of Green Peru, an NGO received the greatest number of votes.

Below is a summary of her plan.



Victoria Vilma Blanco Zamalloa (Peru)  
Southern Rainforest General Manager  
Conservation Association for the Southern Rainforest

#### Theme : Biodiversity Conservation

Since 1995, I have been working at the Conservation Association for the Southern Rainforest (Green Peru). Green Peru works to protect the uniquely intact tropical rain forests of southeastern Peru, one of the most biologically diverse areas in the world.

We have been developing different areas of action that are part of our long-term biodiversity conservation strategy: 1) conservation of wilderness areas combined with the study of sustainable economic activities, 2) territorial ordering through land titling of low-density rain forest residents, 3) media awareness campaigns and environmental education, 4) pure and applied scientific research, 5) ecotourism projects along with the participation of local people and 6) land acquisition in specific areas to create private reserves for protection.

In Peru, the major environmental problems in the rural area are: soils and biologic biodiversity lost related to erosion, deforestation, headwaters contamination, and the inadequate use of the natural resources. These problems have negative effects on the entire rural population, decreasing the possibilities for good quality lifestyles. Regarding women, this has repercussions, prejudicing their roles as caretakers of food production, distribution, and management within their families and their communities. Usually women are defined or define themselves as housekeepers. This masks their roles as daily administrators of natural resources.

The countermeasures for these problems are: 1) in-

volving professional women as leaders in environmental issues; 2) breaking institutional standards based on genders to make visible women who work with or make decisions about these resources; 3) incorporating entire communities in biodiversity conservation, and 4) creating an approach which balances economic, social and natural components.

Green Peru is working on the following initiatives to implement these countermeasures: 1) using biological diversity in a sustainable way for carefully designed ecotourism. This in turn protects the area; involves local people as partners and direct beneficiaries; pays for on-going costs of protection and generates jobs for local people. 2) training women of different communities (Yine Yami, Machiguenga and other ethnic groups), in crafts manufacture to enhance their familial economic contribution; 3) acquiring cloud forest land as private reserve. Green Peru now owns 4,500 hectares. This acquisition protects the cloud forest as a habitat for future species. Through carbon sequestration applied to this area, Green Peru is also helping to reduce global warming and improve biodiversity preservation in Peru.

Finally, Green Peru's Action Plan to improve our ecotourism reinforces management concerning the decrease of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and noise contamination. Specifically, this involves the implementation of solar panels in the different lodges managed by Green Peru and its conservation network. Green Peru needs the participation of an experienced enterprise which has knowledge and technology. Green Peru also needs funds in order to pay for solar panel equipment, installation and training by experts. After obtaining the equipment, Green Peru needs to train women and men involved in its operation. Persons in charge of each lodge will be responsible for the continued monitoring of the solar panels.

In conclusion, not only the Green Peru's presentation but also all of the action plans were instructive concerning environmental problems and initiatives. One audience member commented about how good it was that the Green Peru plan combined tropical rain forest protection activities with the creation of job opportunities for local people. Other participants action plans gave the audience ideas about measures against air pollution and increasing solid waste and water shortage. They also suggested initiatives concerning public health and hygiene, environmental education and the situation of women in farming village.



Participants at the seminar's final session

#### Women Facing Environment Hazard Disasters

Carmen Ledesma (Peru)

Risk management to promote women's development in rural areas is a process of adopting policies, strategies and practices oriented to reduce the risks of disasters and minimize their effects. The aim is to reduce vulnerability of the female population that occupies territory stricken by natural disasters and socio-natural phenomena, such as, floods and draught, landslides, and other environment hazards. Natural disasters are very common in rural and Andean regions in Peru.

This article introduces the experiences of women in San Mateo de Huanchor (a town located around 90 kilometers east from the capital of Peru 3,500 meters above sea level). San Mateo de Huanchor must address environment hazards. These hazards were caused by private mines' emission of waste and air pollution. Research shows that the worst consequences of mine pollution affect children and women, especially, women working in rural areas and their families.

In 1998, a coal mine owned by Lasiandra Profane started production in San Mateo de Huanchor. Mine waste was delivered to the free land near the city without any protection. Private and public universities conducted research 2000-2003 on this situation. The results of these studies called for help from specialized health and civil rights organizations to check the levels of pollution and health of population sectors.

A Committee of Victims was set up and managed by woman who started to work with local authorities as well as regional and national development institutions. The purpose of the committee is to inform these entities about these kinds of disasters as well as stop the disasters to avoid further destruction.

This committee and CODEMADES, a popular organization of San Mateo, have designed strategic plans, including budgets with risk management criteria and punishment for violations of environment laws.

It is necessary that the local citizens, experts and authorities in general to consider daily risk reduction criteria in their decision making processes. This is important for the promotion of safe investments. It is also important for the improvement of human rights mechanisms and rural economy areas vulnerable to natural disasters.

#### San Mateo de Huanchor Disaster Victims

The zone of conflict is the town Glorieta de Mayoc of San

Mateo de Huanchor, Province of Huarochiri, Lima. In October 2000, a special report for the General Office of Health in Peru established that 100% of population of Mayoc was affected by heavy metals like coal in levels higher than those that can be tolerated by human bodies. In March 2001, 293 citizens were evaluated in San Mateo. Results showed that 67% of these people had higher lead levels in their blood; 48% had cadmium; 39% had arsenic and 28% showed higher mercury levels. Further studies showed that 6,000 citizens were affected by different kinds of toxics and suffered contamination. Some consequences of these negative effects were: chronic dermatitis, kidney malfunctions, chronic malnutrition, increased chances of skin cancer and delays in mental development. 86% of children in this area showed impaired intellectual development. Overall, the evidence clearly showed the detrimental effects of the town's environmental hazards.

#### Future Solutions

An official demand was sent to Inter-American Commission of Human Rights/Organization of American States about the violation of basic human rights like the right to live in Peru. The demand was accepted by Commission in 2003. The Commission called on Peru to assume responsibilities. It also asked Peru to adopt immediate measures to resolve the conflict and deal with the demands of the affected population including the indemnity for victims.

Civil society and the women of San Mateo Huanchor handled environmental disaster issues by actively engaging in legal mechanisms:

- Moving town toxics immediately out of Mayoc/San Mateo
- Addressing the impact of environment hazards on victims
- Designing with all involved actors a development plan to rescue San Mateo's environment and ecosystem

Finally, in July of 2004, government, private sector, and those mines responsible adopted to move the toxics to another special place in order to protect the local people and rivers. These parties also agreed to cover the necessary cost. This experience in a local community showed that women leaders can definitely have input in decision making concerning issues of injustice and disasters caused by irresponsible investment. This leadership was able to finally protect or put in place an irreversible mechanism for the decontamination of their lands. At the same time, the community's possibilities for growth and sustainable development were enhanced.



▲ Air pollution from mineral toxics



▲ Mineral toxics impact on a local

## HIV/AIDS Pandemic: Averting Disaster

Prabha Thacker (Nepal)

Nepal's demographic situation is characterized by predominant gender inequity with a growing threat of HIV. Early marriage amongst girls is still prevalent. Despite the government's efforts to curb child marriage, the Maoist insurgency, which has lasted for a decade or more, has further triggered not only a fear psychosis but also a need to have daughters in conflict affected regions, particularly, marry early. In addition, the exodus of IDPs (Internally Displaced People), including mostly married adolescents and young able bodied girls, fleeing human insecurity and violence, is growing. While men in remote mountain areas have been migrating to India, young wives and single women have been forced to migrate for human security to urban/semi-urban market centers within Nepal. Unfortunately, this does not provide them with a safe refuge because they become vulnerable to sexual exploitation and violence.

In Nepal, social discrimination against women begins from childhood and continues throughout their life cycle. Moreover, a women's sexual health is most exploited during the early reproductive years of her life. Dictated by religious and cultural norms including an obsession with purity of the female body, giving daughters in marriage at an early age is still seen in certain rural regions as the heavenly duty of caring parents. This perspective is found in those rural regions of the country where caste and tradition based hierarchies foster the exploitative practices against women. Moreover, social pressures as well as gender disparities and vulnerabilities due to young age have further caused powerlessness among young women. Nowhere is this more pronounced than in this sub-population's exposure to HIV/AIDS.

Presently, HIV/AIDS in Nepal is largely transferred through heterosexual contact. And male migrant workers, returning home either permanently or otherwise, are the main carriers of HIV/AIDS. If their returnee husbands are found to be infected, women are blamed and stigmatized by family and community. As silent victims, these women must live with their shamed bodies. Furthermore, treatment to prevent transfer of infection from HIV infected women to their unborn children is not yet available in most health institutes, except in the government run Maternity Hospital in Kathmandu.

The above trends exemplify how HIV/AIDS may become the leading cause of death among the young, particularly, women. In addition, the general threat to human life and its heavy toll on the country's social and economic development, is also great.

Although substantial progress has been made towards gender equality in the social, economic and legal fields through legislation, policy and programs, it is still likely that adolescent married and unmarried females will be major victims of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. This is due to the sexist structure of Nepalese society. That is unless a vigorous and broad-based response is mounted as soon as possible.

## Pakistani Women Speak Up for their Rights

Tehreem Hasan Syed (Pakistan)

Suriya has seven children-five daughters and two sons. Until recently, she had not set foot outside her house. Circumstances forced her to start managing her life. Her husband was a hard working car mechanic who asserted that "no wife of mine will ever work." Despite desperate pleas from Suriya that she should be allowed to work to improve their living conditions, he never accepted these pleas, considering them below his ego and authority. Many families in Pakistan suffer from this kind of male attitude. The family was hardly able to make ends meet when disaster struck their household. The head of the family, an Alpha Male, was after all a human, fallible to the ups and downs of life. Later, he was diagnosed with acute arthritis and became almost paralysed by the disease. The debility made it difficult for him to work properly.

The responsibility for his care, which became the first priority of the family, had to be borne bravely. Besides their time, care and dedication to him, money was also needed to manage the medical bills. For a family dependent on the male head of the household, a totally different situation became even more difficult. Bold steps had to be taken. Suriya had been forced to move out and start working. As her husband's way of thinking about Suriya's working outside the home had not changed, this change generated fights and tension between them. The husband hurled insults freely because Suriya was behaving against his wishes. A couple must realize that anything can happen to any one of them. Presently, Suriya is employed as a nurse in a private hospital. She received training from one of the programs initiated by Ministry of Women Development (MoWD).

In Pakistan, women are an integral part of the economy. However, their participation rate is lower than men's due to cultural taboos and the non-availability of suitable jobs. In addition, although women are not excluded from participating, they remain rather invisible and at a disadvantage. One of the most positive developments during this administration has been the emergence of a changed perspective regarding women's participation and development. Stress on female literacy, gender equality and women participation is being encouraged. MoWD is engaged in formulating new and innovative projects to uplift Pakistani women from all strata of life. Disaster and tragedy is still there but now the chances of dealing with them are better than before. Women in Pakistan are speaking up now for their rights.



▲Suriya is working at a local hospital as a nurse



## New Foreign Correspondents

In 1991 the Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women (KFAW) established the foreign correspondents system in order to build broad networks with people in overseas countries, particularly in the Asia and Pacific region. This year KFAW was pleased to receive 23 applications for FY 2007 foreign correspondents. Of these 23 applicants from 15 countries, KFAW selected nine from eight countries. As a result, the total number of past and present foreign correspondents has reached 227 in 34 countries. Through its network of foreign correspondents, KFAW will continue to provide up-to-date information from various parts of the world.

### Theme : Women and Community Activities

In Europe and the U.S., the numbers of women who stand for national elections and women who become national policymakers are increasing. They fact is truly encouraging from the perspective of promoting gender equality. The ratio of women among policymakers, however, is still low. Moreover, there is a great gap among regions. In this context, KFAW hopes that more and more women will exert leadership in national politics as well as in large enterprises/organizations. At the same time, we at KFAW believe that women's activities at the community level are equally important. With this in mind, we have selected "women and community activities" as this year's theme for reports from foreign correspondents. One example of a successful community activity is the women's anti-pollution campaign held in Kitakyushu City. During the 1960s, industrial activities that underpinned Japan's high economic growth caused serious air and water pollution in Kitakyushu. Harmful substances discharged from factories even caused residents' health problems. To combat the pollution, women of Kitakyushu initiated an anti-pollution campaign with the slogan: "We Want Our Blue Skies Back." This campaign, finally helped restore the present clean environment in communities throughout Kitakyushu.

We hope that foreign correspondents will report on many other cases in which women have successfully exerted strong leadership in community activities. We are also interested in more cases in which women have helped vitalize their communities through their active participation in community planning and policymaking. Moreover, we hope to receive reports on community activities designed to achieve gender equality, along with reports on the social impact of those activities.

#### Uganda



Ms. Namande Grace, an educational expert, works at Community Effort to Support Children (CESUC). After completing studies at the National Teachers College, she taught 1997-2005.

#### Burkina Faso



Ms. Karimatou Jocelyne Vokouma-Boussari, the Secretary General of the Women Promotion Ministry, has also been a journalist and a human rights' advisor. She participated in the 2004 JICA Seminar on Gender Mainstreaming Policies for Government Officers in Japan.

#### Kenya



Mr. Justus A. M. Mutie, an expert on development issues, is currently Deputy Director of Development of Gender for the government of Kenya.

### THE FORUM WINDOW

#### Becoming Old in a Foreign Country - Providers and Recipients of Care Services -

In April 2007, the Japanese government started to open the door for nurses and care workers from the Philippines. To study the situations of such migrant workers in Europe, I visited Denmark in 2006. During that trip, I had an opportunity to visit a Japanese woman living in an apartment for the elderly in Copenhagen.

The woman in her mid-sixties, was suffering from advanced Parkinson's disease. Using

a wheelchair, she lived alone in a 60-square-meter apartment with two rooms, a kitchen, and bathroom. She receives free medical treatment and daily-life assistance. Whereas Denmark's care system for the elderly is similar to those in Sweden and other Nordic countries, Denmark places particular priority on visiting care. In Denmark, different from Sweden, a special committee decides whether patients receive free visiting care and necessary nursing services.

According to the same Japanese lady, most of the care workers are migrant workers who came to Denmark from Iran, Africa and Eastern Europe. One staff member who takes care of her is a man from Ethiopia. Regardless of

## Uzbekistan



Ms. Asuka Kawano is a researcher on education and culture in “Maharra”, an Uzbekistan traditional community. She will focus on modern Uzbekistan as it relates to women and their community activities.

## Nepal

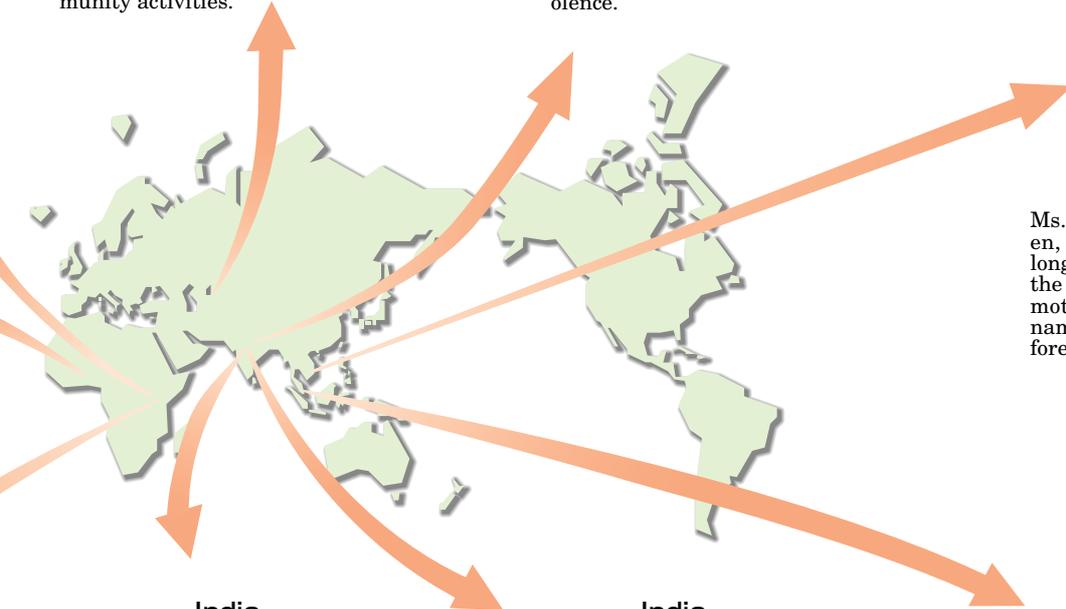


Ms. Bharati Pokharel has worked as a journalist for the past nine years. She has especially reported on events where women have been made victims of gender-based discrimination and violence.

## Vietnam



Ms. Le Thi has researched about women, gender and family studies for a long time. She has been an advisor to the Swedish and Danish Fund for Promotion on Gender Equality in Vietnam. This is her fifth time as a KFAW foreign correspondent.



## India



Ms. Swapna Majumdar, a journalist, writes on development issues from a gender perspective. She also contributes to reports for development policies by members of the Indian parliament. This is her tenth time as a KFAW foreign correspondent.

## India



Ms. Satoko Chaterjee works at the Development Research Communication and Services Centre (DRCSC). This centre contributes to rural development, environmental agriculture as well as education. She was in Cambodia before India as a Japan International Volunteer Center (JVC) volunteer.

## Singapore



Ms. Gloria A. Rosanow, an Indonesian, is based in Singapore. She has an avid interest in social issues, especially, religion, ethnic relations, collective memory, culture and marginalized communities.

nationality, she explained that all care workers are Danish governmental staff members who have received sufficient training. The only problem she has is that she cannot use new medication as much as she would like to. Even though she is provided with free medical treatment, she cannot access desired medicines due to a budget limit. However, as she can consult with her caseworker, whenever she is not happy with her care workers, there are no problems with these caregivers. “Do you sometimes feel that you’d like to go back to Japan?” I asked her hesitating as I was not sure how she would react. “Why do you ask?” she exclaimed. She then responded confidently, “I’ve been here for 30 years and have many friends here. In Den-

mark, foreigners can lead comfortable lives, since our human rights are fully respected.”

I was deeply impressed by her firm stand and independent attitude. Simultaneously, I could not help but compare her situation to that of elderly people both Japanese and non-Japanese in Japan, particularly, those living alone. I also worry about how these seniors, foreign migrant care workers who are coming soon and Japanese care workers can work together smoothly. At the same time, the new policy will make Japanese private homes and care institutions global workplaces.

Masami Shinozaki  
KFAW Chief Researcher

# INFORMATION

## Greetings from New Chair & President



Chair  
**Yoshiko Misumi**

It is my great pleasure to announce that on April 1, 2007, I assumed the Chair of the Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women (KFAW). I am determined to continue my service to further reinforce KFAW's activities, and to achieve our common global goals: Equality, Development and Peace.

Since KFAW's establishment, I have served in different capacities to further our goals of raising Asian women's social status, promoting their partnership and mutual development under the motto: "Learning about Each Other, Sharing and Helping One Another." Since fiscal 2006, KFAW has been committed to global campaigns to promote the U.N. Decade for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), serving as the Secretariat for the Kitakyushu ESD Council. On this occasion I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all who have offered me their generous support, cooperation and advice over all those years. And I would like to request your continued support of and cooperation with KFAW's activities.



President  
**Kuniko Yoshizaki**

It is my pleasure to announce that in April 2007, I was entrusted with the presidency of the Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women. I was also appointed as the Director of the Kitakyushu Municipal Gender Equality Center "MOVE." Until March 2007, I was a faculty member at Fukuoka Women's University, teaching American literature (by women writers) and feminist criticism.

Seventeen years have passed since the founding of the Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women. Over the past years, the Forum has been committed to comprehensive studies of Asian women as well as to various activities designed to help raise Asian women's social status. Currently, the Forum is also committed to the Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) program led by the United Nations. I am determined to do my best to fulfill my tasks with regard to these commitments and would appreciate your generous support and cooperation.

### KFAW 2008-2009 RECRUITMENT OF FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS

KFAW is pleased to announce its 2008-2009 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 another country outside of 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 : "The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child"
  - 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 any way. The photos must be clearly visible. Submitted photos will not be returned. (This 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 29, 2008 will be accepted.

### COVER PROFILE



**Ms. Yukari Sotohira**  
*Veterinarian*

Ms. Yukari Sotohira has loved wild animals since her childhood. Now as a veterinarian, she saves animal life at a zoo in Kitakyushu. She treats animals not only inside of zoo but also from the outside. In the latter case,

this involves wild wounded animals which people bring in. She regards veterinarian's work as "conveying life". This means saving animal's lives and maintaining the species. Treatment of wounded animals also show people the importance of life. In short, she is a "life messenger" for recovered and cheerful animals.

### 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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