

Asian Breeze

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Women Today

When I was little, I was an active and cheerful girl, but I was not particularly good at sports or studies. Lacking self-pride, I long sought for something in which I could gain self-confidence. One day, encouraged by a teacher of physical education I consulted, I began to believe that, like my classmates, I too had a unique talent, and that I must do my best to develop my hidden potential, whatever it might be. During my junior high school days, I participated in an 800-meter race, an event in which none of my classmates wanted to take part. Winning that race, I gained much-needed self-confidence. That was the beginning of my life as an athlete.

After I grew up, I participated in the Olympic Games twice as a marathon runner. I learned that the women's marathon was first introduced to the Olympic Games in 1984, at the time of the Los Angeles Games. Until then, the marathon had been considered too "extreme" for women, so there were no opportunities for women to take part in such a race. One woman who wanted to participate in the Boston Marathon, however, submitted an entry using a man's name. She really wanted to participate in the race, which had a long history, knowing well that only men were admitted to take part. Although the organizer discovered that a woman was in the race and tried to withdraw her from it, she was able to finish with the help of male runners. After this incident, the organizer of the Boston Marathon began accepting women's entries, a fact that eventually paved the way for including the women's marathon in the Olympic Games. Today, increasing numbers of sports events admit women. Although I do not believe that all events should be open to women, I also believe that there will be more sports events for women. Despite the short history of women's sports, it will surely continue to expand in scope and target audiences around the world.

Whereas many women athletes are active in various events, women are still underrepresented in sports organizations. Regarding the imbalance between men and women in sports activities, I personally do not believe that women should do everything that men do. Of course, we should not

discriminate against either sex on the grounds of gender, but at the same time we should respect the difference. I believe that we must all make efforts to develop our potential—not as men or as women, but as human beings—and seek fair recognition of our achievements.



Yuko Arimori

Yuko ARIMORI
UNFPA Goodwill Ambassador

Japanese people have long adhered to the ideal of "genuine" amateurism or the conviction that athletes should not ask for or receive money. This is why I was criticized when I commenced a sports business as Japan's first professional runner. Outside Japan, however, increasing numbers of athletes were gaining money for their sports activities. Regarding this trend, I believed that it is both necessary and possible to change in Japan regarding amateurism. I began my sports business in consideration of many young

athletes who were following me. Fortunately, I can now conduct various business activities as a professional athlete. Still in Japan, it is considered wonderful if the man earns the money but the woman does unpaid work. This kind of thinking is outdated. If women do not carry out work that reflects our value, we can not exercise our abilities to the fullest. Already worldwide, the necessity of changing the consciousness about this is evident.

Based on my past experiences and these ideas, I have established RIGHTS Inc., a company to support athletes, including myself, in their business management. In addition to competing in races, I believe that athletes should deliver their messages to sports fans and the general public, messages based on their views of life and what they have learned through their hard training and participation in races. To do this, however, athletes need assistance and support from individuals and organizations. Although athletes can take part in competitions for only a limited portion of their lives, during that short span many athletes build up extraordinary experiences that are unique to them. Such valuable experiences should be shared with many more people. Moreover, after retirement, former athletes should develop their careers by taking advantage of what they have learned through their experiences as athletes. RIGHTS Inc. helps such athletes build channels to

the public. RIGHTS Inc. also advises athletes regarding ways to deliver their messages. Since I myself received various kinds of support in these matters, I hope to support other and former athletes through the activities of RIGHTS Inc.

Besides my involvement in RIGHTS Inc., I, along with others, also established an NPO called Hearts of Gold. The impetus to create this NPO started with an invitation after the Atlanta Olympics to participate in a charity race held in Cambodia. The race was designed to support local people who needed prosthetic limbs. In attending that race, I visited a developing country for the first time in my life. There I saw firsthand people suffering from poverty and who, at the same time, were surprisingly powerful and vigorous. I was strongly impressed by the fact that people can retain their vitality even under such challenging conditions as I saw there. In the following year, I participated in the second charity race in Cambodia. At that time I saw a remarkable change, change in a positive way, from the first event. Many adults and children with prosthetic limbs were participating in the race. In Cambodia, there are many victims of antipersonnel landmines; yet the Cambodian government provides no financial aid to such people. Still worse, landmine victims are discriminated against by their neighbors due to belief in reincarnation, which is deeply embedded in the minds of local people. They believe that victims deserve their present misfortune, which is divine justice for their own misdeeds in their previous lives.

The marathon race was a rare opportunity for such victims to demonstrate their presence and vitality. To many victimized children, the race offered encouragement to practice running, and what is more, hope for living. After seeing that a single sports event can inspire and enliven so many people, I set up Hearts of Gold, with the aim of supporting the self-reliance of Cambodian people. Of the diverse activities of the NPO, the Cambodian government particularly valued our program for developing sports trainers. In recognition of the program, to which we had been committed for five years, the government asked us to help in the preparation of physical education guidelines for elementary schools. Until then, in Cambodia there had been no physical education program guidelines for elementary schools. Even though elementary school days comprise the most important period for children's physical development, Cambodian children did not have any opportunity to learn about their bodies or health conditions. We

completed preparation of the guidelines in 2007. These guidelines will now be used in 2008 at specified model schools, where teachers will provide physical education in accordance with these guidelines.

Sports can enliven children and create strong bonds between them. Making efforts in sports can change children's lives, even though not all of them will become athletes. The essence in teaching sports, I believe, does not reside in teaching techniques. Through teaching sports, we can best encourage children to live their lives by fully developing their potential. Through training, children can learn the value of maintaining communication with other people, retaining health, observing rules and above all, making efforts without giving up. While enjoying games, children can learn all those essential elements of their lives. I want to deepen public understanding of the vital importance of sports and the unlimited roles that sports can play in children's education and human resource development.

Immediately after finishing the marathon race at the Atlanta Olympic Games, I said, "*jibun de jibun wo hometai*" (I want to praise myself), because I knew more than anyone else how much effort I had made. I hope to continue making efforts so that I can convince myself that I have done all that I could. People in the world are living in various environments: some in comfortable environments, others in harsh environments, and still others in extreme calamity. Despite such differences, however, all individuals have their own potential. I firmly believe that all people should find opportunities to fully develop their potential, regardless of gender. It is my sincere hope that each and every person will do their best to maximize their potential. I also hope that instead of waiting for opportunities to be provided, all people will take action by themselves.

Profile of Yuko Arimori

As a marathon runner, who won the silver medal in Barcelona (1992) and the bronze medal in Atlanta (1996). After those competitions, she became a professional athlete. She now serves as Director of RIGHTS Inc.; Representative of NPO Hearts of Gold; a UN Population Fund (UNFPA) goodwill ambassador; and a member of the Women's Committee, International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF).

※ This text is based on an interview with Yuko Arimori on January 17, 2008.

Sports and Gender Part 2

Gender Bias regarding Sports and Exercises



Keiko ITANI
Professor, Department of Health
and Physical Education,
Kyoto University of Education

Whenever I visit a fitness club near my house, I see many more women than men doing exercise. It is surprising to see that so many women are fond of exercise. In dance and yoga programs, women comprise the great majority of participants. In fashionable sportswear, they seem to be enjoying the exercises to their hearts' content, as well as friendships with other participants. Many men, on the other hand, are exercising alone. Some are running silently, while others are using strength-training machines, gasping for breath. Apparently, some of these men began coming to the fitness club in order to prevent lifestyle-related diseases. Others seem to have begun doing exercises that they can do by themselves, since they do not like playing team sports, such as soccer. There are of course many men who love competitive sports events, like golf and soccer.

According to a recent survey (*The 2006 SSF National Sport-Life Survey* by Sasakawa Sports Foundation), the "active sports population" (people who engaged in sports activities at least twice a week) in Japan comprised 15.9% for both men and women. The percentages of those who had not engaged in any form of sports activities during the previous year were 27.4% for men and 35.6% for women. The survey also indicates that over 60% of women in their thirties and forties complained that they did not have opportunities to enjoy sports, even though they wished to do so.

Many Japanese women stop enjoying sports or doing exercises while they are young. For example, the number of junior and senior high female students participating in sports club activities decline as their school year advances. After graduating from senior high school or university, many women stop doing exercises. A generation-based analysis shows that the ratio of women who enjoy sports reaches bottom at the age when most women are busy doing housework and taking care of children. After reaching fifty years of age, many women resume sports activities.

Are the differences in this exercise data attributable to physical and psychological characteristics unique to respective sex? Or do men and women have a common inclination toward sports activities?

Although the percentage of women who had not

engaged in any form of sports during the previous year was higher than that of men by about 8%, I assume that many women were willing to enjoy sports but had no opportunity to do so. I also assume that many men wishing to enjoy sports had few opportunities to do so.

Regarding the types of sports and exercises favored by men and women, we cannot simply state that men, more so than women, prefer competitive sports and hard training. Recently, increasing numbers of women have begun to participate in wrestling, *judo* and other sports events that used to be considered men's sports. Both men and women are enjoying "boxercise," which is becoming increasingly popular now, as well as other exercises incorporating combat sports motions, such as punching and kicking. On the other hand, few men participate in synchronized swimming and other sports events that have been developed primarily for women. At fitness clubs, only a few men participate in yoga and aerobics classes.

In Part I of this lecture series, I discussed the fact that modern sports originated as an educational tool to develop boys' masculine character. Therefore they are characterized by a strong competitive tendency. I also discussed the fact that modern sports require athletes to gain more muscle and reduce body fat. Sports events that are now popular in school and society also reflect these tendencies. On the other hand, yoga and dance, which are popular among women, promote dialogue with one's own body, rather than competition with others. They demand that performers observe and care for their own physical condition, rather than achieve new records or defeat rivals.

In conclusion, I believe that there are no great differences between men and women regarding physical abilities or psychological preference for sports events. Rather than gender differences, I believe that there is gender-based bias in the existing sports culture. This is a cultural bias among both genders that leads men and women to develop different attitudes toward sports. Were it not for such bias, both men and women would be able to enjoy whatever events they truly wished to enjoy. While women wish to participate more in sports activities and exercises, men probably also desire to enjoy dance and yoga, but hesitate to do so due to the embedded stereotypical attitude that men must engage in masculine, competitive sports.

Participating in the 52nd Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women

Kuniko YOSHIKAWA (KFAW President)

The 52nd Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) was held at the UN Headquarters in New York for about two weeks from February 25 to March 7, 2008. The Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women (KFAW) was granted NGO Special Consultative Status by the Economic and Social Council for the United Nations in 2002. Since that year, KFAW members have annually participated in CSW sessions. In addition to national delegates, nearly 2,000 representatives of NGOs (18 from Japan) participated in this year's session. I also attended the 52nd Session as an observer and participated in several workshops organized by NGOs. Although I attended the session for only three days, I would like to briefly report on it. My report is based on what I observed there firsthand and what I learned via various media after returning home, particularly regarding the Agreed Conclusions of the 52nd Session.

The 52nd Session

During the opening ceremony of the 52nd Session (where discussions were held among the representatives of the 45 CSW-member states), UN Secretary-General BAN Ki-moon stated, "Violence against women is never acceptable, never excusable, never tolerable." He declared the initiation of a global campaign to end violence against women (2008-2015). During the campaign, he asked representatives of participating states to prepare



▲Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary-General

and enact laws stipulating that violent acts against women constitute crimes. He also asked the media, male leaders and women's groups to cooperate with this campaign.

The priority theme for the 52nd Session was "Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women." According to the Japan Women's Watch (JAWW), the primary element of financing is the flow of money. In the recognition that public and private financing organizations in the world generally do not benefit women as well as men, discussions were held regarding the ideal state of money flow and effective investment methods for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. In addition to this theme, various meetings were held under several other themes, including "violence against women" and "gender perspectives on climate change."

After returning home, on the UN and other online

sites, I found the statement delivered on February 28 by Dr. Yoriko MEGURO, representative of the Japanese delegation, along with the Agreed Conclusions publicized on March 11. I was impressed with the ease of obtaining such information via the Internet almost concurrently with people attending meetings in New York. Dr. Meguro stressed: in order to realize gender equality, women's participation is essential at all levels of policy and decision-making. She also emphasized the importance of reforming financing schemes so as to ensure that they truly benefit women. To promote the building of a gender-equal society, she explained existing problems in Japan and the initiatives being taken to resolve them.



▲The 52nd Session

The Agreed Conclusions adopted by participants at the 52nd Session stipulate that the Commission on the Status of Women reaffirms the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. In addition, they also stipulate that the Commission also recognizes the importance

of gender mainstreaming as a tool for achieving gender equality. Specifically, the document posits the need to "incorporate a gender perspective into the design, development, adoption and execution of all policies and budgetary processes." In addition, the document stipulates the need to "integrate a gender perspective in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and reporting of all national economic policies, strategies and plans." The Agreed Conclusions also contain many practical initiatives that should be taken.

Vigorous NGO Events

Concurrently with this session, many NGO parallel events were held throughout the session period at Church Center, situated in front of the UN Headquarters. Of those programs, I attended workshops titled "Violence against Women and Girls," "Financing and Gender" and "Envisioning a 5th UN Women's World Conference." Unlike the formal meetings held at the UN Headquarters, these events featured a friendlier and more casual atmosphere. Audience members asked many questions and offered suggestions. By exchanging information and name cards with many women representatives of various NGOs, I expanded my global network there.

Asian Children Living with All Their Might in Harsh Environments —A Precious Lesson for Japanese People—

The Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women (KFAW) is a full member of the National Committee for the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), Japan. Moreover, KFAW supports the UNIFEM Kitakyushu Local Committee, one of the UNIFEM's nine local committees in Japan to help improve women's lives in developing countries including support women for their economic independence. Recently, the UNIFEM Kitakyushu Local Committee organized a lecture by Tetsuro IKEMA, representative of the NPO Asia Child Support. He visited the poorest regions in various Asian countries to shoot a film and render support to poor people. His lecture, based on his first-hand experiences, was utterly shocking and extremely impressive for us Japanese, who are living in the so-called "affluent society."



▲Tetsuro Ikema

If you ask Japanese children, "What is your dream?" they are likely to reply that their dream is to become a professional sports player, TV talent, designer, pilot, etc. When Tetsuro Ikema asked the same question to several Filipino children, they said that they wanted to survive to adulthood. In Cambodia, he met children whose dream was to eat as much rice as they like. In contrast, Japanese children of today do not regard food as something important or precious. After school lunch, there are always huge amounts of leftovers. Yet on the same planet, he has seen radically different situations. In Mongolia, for instance, he saw a couple, that had not eaten any food for a week, abandon their own children. In Thailand, he saw parents selling their daughters to sex-work brokers in order to save the rest of their families from starvation. In Cambodia, he saw children inhaling paint thinner because it was the cheapest way to forget their hunger pangs. The price of paint thinner is half that of bread or noodles. When feeling hungry, Mongolian children living in manholes fill their mouths with tatters, old newspaper or cardboard and keep chewing on them to forget their hunger.

When you hear the term "school," what sort of image do you have? For most Japanese, "school" implies nine years of compulsory education provided by local governments free of charge. Japanese people also take it for granted that local governments build and manage school facilities. In Myanmar, however, local residents, rather than governments, are responsible for building school facilities. Only after buildings are completed do the governments dispatch teachers to the schools. However, even though local residents

are fully aware of the vital importance of providing education for children, the building of school facilities is extremely difficult for local residents, particularly in rural villages where few have cash income. Ikema is committed to programs to help build schools in such villages. When an elementary school is opened in such a village, he observed all the children learning eagerly. Some attend classes with their younger brothers and sisters, taking care of their young siblings while studying in class.

At the lecture held in Kitakyushu, Ikema's story about Asian children battling various hardships moved many audience members to tears. What impressed them most deeply, however, was his statement "Volunteer activities are indeed helpful. The most important activity in life, however, is to live your own life with all your might."

Ikema lectures throughout Japan, telling his audience about children's miserable state in Asian developing countries. He said that the purpose of his lecture activities is not to ask for help for such children, but to enable Japanese audiences to learn about the importance of living each day to the fullest. He introduces children who are striving hard to survive in the worst settings that Japanese audiences could ever imagine: garbage dump sites, manholes, etc. While talking about these children, he hopes that Japanese people, particularly children, will learn important values that have been forgotten in the so-called "affluent society"—the spirit of self-reliance, gratitude for one's parents, and above all the strong will to maximize life.



▲At the lecture held at "Move" (Kitakyushu Municipal Gender Equality Center) in Kitakyushu, Japan.

The Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women, entrusted by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), annually organized the Seminar on Gender Perspective in Environment and Development. Victoria Vilma BLANCO ZAMALLOA was one of the program participants for FY 2006. One year has passed since she finished the seminar in Japan. She submitted this report about her activities in her own country.

BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION Victoria Vilma BLANCO ZAMALLOA (Peru)

The main objectives of Peru Verde Association (Peru Verde - Green Peru), a Peruvian Association, are the conservation and appreciation of Peru's flora and fauna. Also these objectives include the testing of possible methods for sustainable development including the participation of local people. In particular, Peru Verde works to protect the uniquely and intact tropical rain forests of southeastern Peru, biologically one of the most diverse areas in the world.

At this time, I would like to talk about our land acquisition project to convert these properties into a private reserve inside the Peru Verde's Private Cloud Forest Reserve. This reserve, purchased thanks to private donors' support, is a protected area within the Manu National Park, Province of Paucartambo, (approximately 150 km from Cusco). The reserve extends from the southeastern border of the Manu National Park to the left margin of the Kosñipata River.

This forest is like a sponge that absorbs the mist and rain carried by the southeastern winds. The water gradually released from this dense forest slowly flows downhill to form the streams that later unite to form the Kosñipata River. This forest is located on steep slopes, which makes them very vulnerable and susceptible to erosion. For these reasons, this forest is inappropriate for any extractive or agricultural activities.

The current reserve and the purchased lands also protect the largest, most accessible, and tamest known population of the amazing Andean Cock-of-the-rock bird. The spectacled Bears and monkeys are also part of the rare and spectacular wildlife found there. We protect this fragile forest from exploitation for timber and Andean colonists too.



▲The Cock-of-the-rock bird

To ensure income for the conservation at wilderness areas combined with sustainable economic activities, we developed an ecotourism project inside the reserve. We established a rustic biological station to receive and support Peruvian and foreigner biologists interested in working on fauna, flora, and conservation topics. There we also built a blind to watch the Cock-of-the-rock birds in their lek or mating spot. The beautiful Cock-of-the-rock is Peru's national bird.

Since 1996 tourists from different companies pay to watch the Cock-of-the-rock bird. This lek has

become famous among scientists, tourists as well as the national and international press. This is because there is no other spot in the entire Andes where so many of these blazing red birds can be seen so easily.

In 1996, we built a bigger biological station used as well as a lodge for ecotourism purpose. We initiated a modest, low-impact ecotourism program in our cloud forest biological station. Afterwards, we built a Cock-of-the-rock Lodge. In order to ensure tourists for our ecotourism lodges, Peru Verde created a travel agency: InkaNatura Travel (conservation through tourism). The lodge is in charge of diffusing our goals to the agencies and tourists that visit the place. All the profits obtained by InkaNatura Travel and Cock of the Rock Lodge goes into our conservation work.

We purchased more hectares of forest currently owned by neighbors of our reserve. By buying these lands, Peru Verde's reserve was enlarged and the protection of the existing reserve was greatly enhanced. At this time, Peru Verde owns a total of 4,500 hectares of cloud forest along the southeastern border of Manu National Park.

One project objective is to improve the protection of the Cloud Forest Reserve. Another is the acquisition more land to increase the size of the reserve. This in turn will help foster better protection of the steep, fragile headwaters as well as prevent possible hunting or logging on or near the existing reserve.

During 2008, we are also planning a new Reforestation Project near the private reserve along with a local community. For this project, we need to train local residents to build green houses to grow the plants needed for reforestation. In addition, the idea is to use fruit and other useful trees, for the community's economic benefits from the commercialization of these crops.

In conclusion, this project is benefiting more than 5,000 people, including the Sunchubamba, the Kosñipata Valley, and Madre de Dios regions, guaranting water collector forests for the future. In addition, thanks to this Cock-of-the-rock birds lek, we are saving 14 Cock-of-the-rock leks, the habitat of other species, and the cloud forest. Through ecotourism, we are helping them help themselves. Moreover, by protecting these forests, we are supporting carbon sequestration. This then contributes to efforts to reduce global warming and improve biodiversity preservation. By using only 1 hectare out of 4,500 hectares for ecotourism, we are minimizing our impact on the environment.

FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS REPORTS

(Access other foreign correspondents' reports on a website: http://www.kfaw.or.jp/about/about_04-01.html.en)

Women and Community Activities

From Underneath the Flyover: Educating Street Children in Indonesia

Gloria ARLINI (Singapore)

Street children are a familiar sight in Indonesia. They are commonly found loitering around traffic light junctions in urban centers, often with simple handmade musical instruments, singing slightly off-tune to the lyrics of Indonesian pop songs for donations as low as IDR 100 (approx. 1 U.S. cent). Frequently, they are content just to peer into the windows of posh cars stuck in traffic. Children look longingly at the cars' comfortable interiors while the owners ignore their piercing gazes.

As of 2003, the Indonesian Department of Social Welfare recorded the existence of approximately 50 thousand street children in the country¹. These children typically come from poor families who are unable to provide them with proper schooling. Despite Indonesia's nine years compulsory education program, and in spite of the recently introduced School Operational Aid that empowers selected schools to fund children from low income families, street children continue to shy away from formal education and remain on the streets.

The reasons for this vary. Some drop out of school in favor of more practical money-making activities, such as, being *pengamen* (street artists). Others suffer from low self-esteem. Most street children, though, feel that they occupy a different social reality from full-paying students. Their marginalized existence, impoverished background and uncertain future come together to build a socio-psychological barrier that prevents them from going to school like other "normal students." As a result, these uneducated street children become even more vulnerable to the perils of the streets, with many of them falling prey to child trafficking, prostitution, drug pedaling and other crimes.

Sri Irianingsih (Rian) and Sri Rosiati (Rossy), twin sisters in their fifties, felt that something needs to be done to break this cycle of poverty. Their brainchild, Sekolah Darurat Kartini (Kartini Emergency School) was therefore built under a flyover in Rawa Bebek, North Jakarta to serve the educational needs of the street children within the vicinity. Indeed, "emergency" is an apt word to describe the appalling educational condition of Indonesian street children. Rian and Rossy were dismayed not only by the abject

poverty of the community living under the flyover, but also by the fact that children as young as ten years old were already entering prostitution. Coming from a comfortable background, the sisters aspired to introduce some form of education to these marginalized children.

Entirely funded by Rian and Rossy's personal savings, Kartini School is nothing like the many ultra-modern, state-of-the-art schools in Indonesia today. It is built using makeshift materials, such as, plywood and cardboards. Its appearance is very much similar to the other humble dwellings built under the flyover of Rawa Bebek. School has entered these children's street life. And education has become readily available without street children having to leave their comfort zone on the streets. It is perhaps this very familiarity that motivates 350 street children from the neighbourhood to diligently attend Kartini School. There they are provided with free education, uniforms, books and stationery from Rian and Rossy—known as the Twin Mothers to the community.

Despite its humble physical appearance, Kartini School seems to have made a difference on the lives of the street children it serves. Since its inception, the school has obtained accreditation in 2000. It has established four more branches in Jakarta—the majority of which are privately funded by Rian and Rossy². Between them, they serve close to a total of 2000 street children from primary school to high school level. Today, keeping abreast with technological development, the street children in Kartini School have even begun to use computer in their lessons.

Rian and Rossy are two women who, through their philanthropic activities, have made a difference to the lives of uneducated street children in Indonesia. They have in effect redefined formal education in Indonesia. Instead of getting children to go to school, they literally bring education closer to home, even to those without homes³. Aptly named after an Indonesian heroine who pioneered the education for women at the turn of the 20th century, Kartini School reaches out to educate the underprivileged group in today's society.

1 This figure is a rough estimate. In addition, statistics vary widely according to the definition of street children.

2 Although mainly privately funded, Kartini School also receives aids and donations from various quarters and sponsors.

3 It must be acknowledged that the Indonesian government was also introduced pilot programmes that aim to bring education to street children, such as, Rumah Singgah (Drop-in Centres) and Mobil Sahabat Anak (Children's Friend Caravan).

Women Empowerment and Leadership in Uganda

NAMANDE Grace (Uganda)

Human rights advocacy of women groups in Uganda has slowly uplifted women's positions in our country. However, it is necessary to fight for the rights of women; especially, the underprivileged ones like the illiterates deep in rural areas and women with disabilities. Although these groups of women are vulnerable, they are intelligent and capable people with leadership skills. They just need a chance to test their skills. They are discriminated against and not taken to school. Women with disabilities normally lack basic needs, comfort and encouragement. Those who qualify are denied big posts, marriage, etc. Women themselves need to be sensitized so as to understand their rights, responsibilities and their importance in the society. This will help them build their self confidence and self esteem for leadership in society.

During selection and recruitment of workers, women with the required qualifications, should be given an equal chance to access jobs and leadership positions. In this case, more women will step up and compete with men and show their abilities.

Government and other institutions within and outside the country need to offer free supportive education to help our women upgrade or acquire more leadership and other important skills. These initiatives should include the introduction of free education for all at every education level. Moreover, government efforts to sensitize the public from the villages to the national level concerning the importance of educating a girl child is essential.

Women leaders in turn can fight for the wellbeing of other women. Helping women to access entrepreneurship skills, start and sustain their income generating activities as well as learn how to access loans through macro and micro finance institutions are also important areas for improvement.

Finally, it is necessary for the Ugandan government to create a more positive environment for women in all aspects including national and international voluntary assistance for women's programs. All of these measures will foster women's empowerment. And this empowerment is necessary for women to increase their leadership at all levels of society.

Women Transcend Borders for New Enterprises

Satoko CHATTERJEE (India)

Shimulberia, a farming village in Bankura, an arid region in the western part of the State of West Bengal, India, has 47 households of the Santhal minority¹. In 2003, an NGO by the name of the Development Research Communication and Services Centre (DRCS) formed a women's group there as a community activity. Of the 200 people in the village, 96 are adult women of whom 26 of them, mostly mothers, joined the group. As is the case of other minority villages, the literacy rate of women in the village is far below the state average, reaching not even 20%². This group began with members other than the leader barely capable of writing their name, if that at all.

Since 2006, a women's NPO from Yokohama, Japan has been supporting multipurpose educational activities and interacting with this village group for several years now. Once a year, women from Shimulberia have enjoyed the opportunity to show visitors from Japan what they are doing. The group has a savings account that grows from monthly dues of INR30 (approx. USD1) and group activities such as preparing elementary school lunches in the area, jointly harvesting borrowed fields and selling seedlings of multipurpose trees.

Members can then take out loans from this savings account, according to set rules, to purchase new livestock. The group also jointly stockpiles rice during the August-November period when food supplies run short. And, if there is a surplus of stored supplies, the group sells them and deposits the money in their

savings account. Using the money saved in this way, the women's group, the supporting NPO from Japan and the local DRCS from India will jointly purchase land this year for multipurpose educational activities. Three times a week in the early evening, reading and writing classes are held, but in the busy farming season, classes are more intermittent.

Shimulberia is no more than one example of what women can do. However, there are many women's groups in villages across India making similar efforts. If there is anything that women from villages like Shimulberia can give to the economically affluent and well educated women of Japan, it may be a different view of the stereotypic poverty. In order to appreciate the efforts made by women in another part of the world and maximize efforts in communities, women in industrially advanced countries must learn and understand the necessity of those efforts.

1 Basic data such as the number of households in Shimulberia was collected by field workers from DRCS working in cohort with members of the women's group.

2 Development and Planning Department, Govt. of West Bengal, *Human Development Profiles 2007, West Bengal, 2007.*



◀ Village women talk with women from Japan there on an inspection tour.



New Foreign Correspondents

In 1991, the Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women (KFAW) established the foreign correspondents system to build up broad networks with people in overseas countries, particularly in the Asia and Pacific region.

This year KFAW was pleased to receive 18 foreign correspondent applications for FY 2008 foreign correspondents. Of the 18 applicants from 13 countries, KFAW selected nine from nine countries. As a result, the total number of past and present foreign correspondents has reached 236 in 34 countries. Through its network of foreign correspondents, KFAW will continue to provide up-to-date information from various parts of the world.

The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child

The theme of the 51st Session of the Commission on the Status of Women was “The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child.” In 1993 the United Nations issued its Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. Violent acts against women include battering, rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, human trafficking, forced prostitution and various traditional customs harmful to women, particularly female genital mutilation. In addition to physical harm, violence against women includes sexual and psychological harm. Girls, because of their youth, are particularly vulnerable to such violent acts.

Today, more people in the world are giving greater consideration to the protection of girls’ rights. Yet, boys still receive better and more care as well as educational opportunities than girls do. Deprived of access to sufficient care and education, many girls in the world cannot build their capacity and thereby, gain economic independence. As a result, many women remain unable to participate in important decision-making regarding their communities and own daily lives. This perpetuates women’s low social status.

To break this vicious cycle and realize gender equality, we must first learn the actual situations of women and girls in various countries and regions in the world. As one means to collect information, KFAW will ask its foreign correspondents to report girls’ situations in their respective countries, particularly violent acts against girls (showing specific cases) and initiatives taken in their countries to eliminate such violent acts.

Pakistan



Tehreem HASAN, who has two masters, has been an educationist, trainer and resource person for various organizations. Currently, she works as a resource person for the Higher Education Commission (HEC), Pakistan. She has also established an institute which offers academic and counseling services for 10 to 20-year-old students.

Burkina Faso



VOKOUMA Jocelyne specialized in history and anthropology. She worked as a journalist, teacher and technical counselor of human rights before assuming her current position as Secretary General of the Women Promotion Ministry in Burkina Faso. This is her third consecutive year as a KFAW foreign correspondent.

India



Meeta SINGH is a qualified medical doctor working on community health and public policy. She specialized in infection control and served in the Indian Army as a medical officer. In addition, she heads the Dignity for the Girl Child Program. This is a program to curb the social trend of preferring boys to girls to ensure that girls can maintain their dignity.

THE FORUM WINDOW

Protect Asian Women from the Tobacco Industry

In March 2008, the Science Council of Japan, an advisory organization to the Japanese government, submitted to the government a written request titled “To Realize a Tobacco-free Society.” Although the Japanese government signed and ratified the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) in 2005, the government’s primary objective was to maintain its honor and reputation in international society, rather than to control smoking. Accordingly, the Council urged the government to take effective measures promptly. The Council

can publicize its opinions in several forms in ranking order of intensity—admonishment, request, statement and announcement.

According the Human Development Index (HDI) (UNDP, 2007/2008), Japan, as in previous years, was ranked eighth in the world. Although Japan maintained the top level in terms of average life expectancy, literacy, school enrollment, economic growth and various other major indicators, in the overall ranking Japan remained in the next-to-top group. While many opinion leaders argue that this is because Japan has not yet achieved gender equality, another essential factor is its high smoking rate.

Currently, smoking is a popular theme of case studies in various academic fields including epidemiolo-

China



OHAMA Keiko is a Japanese woman who received her doctorate in pedagogy in China, in recognition of her comparative studies regarding women's education in Japan and China. Currently, she is working at a Chinese governmental agency as a foreign specialist. Concurrently, as a guest researcher of China Women's College, she is engaged in various collaborations and other projects to create a bridge between Japan and China.

Nepal



Bhawana UPADHYAY, program manager of a relief organization for the poor, is developing and implementing programs related to gender equality and social development issues. Before assuming her present position, she was a researcher at the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), studying problems relating to gender, water and poverty.

Philippines



Val HAM, who specialized in business and social cultural psychology, is now running his own business. He is interested in art and music. He also composes music and plays the guitar and the keyboard. At the same time, he enjoys various sports, especially, basketball and swimming.

Cambodia



TIANN Monie is supervisor of an educational program organized by the NPO-American Assistance for Cambodia/Japan Relief for Cambodia (AAfC/JRfC). This NPO is dedicated to improving the living standards of Cambodian people, particularly the youth and rural poor. Her primary task is providing women and girls with education, so as to protect them from human trafficking, sex work and sexual exploitation.

Singapore



Gloria ARLINI is an Indonesian living in Singapore. She is currently studying for a master's in sociology at the National University of Singapore. She is especially interested in migration, diaspora, races and religion and social memory. This is her third consecutive year as a KFAW foreign correspondent.

Sri Lanka



Kanthi WIJETUNGE, an Additional Secretary, Ministry of Petroleum and Petroleum Resources Development, once served as Director, Women's Bureau of Sri Lanka. At that time, she promoted development programs for gender equality. As a national gender trainer, she has also been involved in building national policies to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and the girl child.

gy, medical science, psychology, pedagogy, economics, policy science, industrial science, and trade studies. Moreover, there is an increasing focus on relations between smoking and gender. The number of male smokers surpassed that of female smokers. Due to increased awareness of the health impact from smoking, however, the men's smoking rate has begun decreasing in advanced countries and newly industrializing economies. Whereas smoking comprises a major problem in the so-called developing countries, the women's smoking rate is growing in advanced countries, as well as in developing countries. The tobacco industry, which is losing its conventional customers, that is, male smokers, is extremely aggressive in developing new markets. They target primarily young people, who the industry expects will long remain customers. Also targeted are

women, whose smoking rate is relatively low and who, therefore, offer greater potential than men as tobacco consumers. Geographically, the industry focuses its marketing efforts on Asia, the region with the world's largest population.

The World Health Organization (WHO) never accepts donations from tobacco companies or their affiliates. Like WHO, we consumers should also pay sufficient attention to the ethical levels of producers.

Junko Otani

Associate Professor, Kyushu University Faculty of Language and Culture; Kyushu University Graduate School of Human-Environment Studies; and Kyushu University Asia Center for Policy Studies
KFAW Visiting Researcher

Asian Lifestyles

~Photos from KFAW Readers~

Tempting Tea Aromas (China)



“YU YUAN”, a huge garden built in Ming Dynasty, is one of the most famous sightseeing spots in Shanghai. It is surrounded by various shops. As today is

Chinese New Year's Day, many people are coming and going in and around the park. Amongst this hustle and bustle of Chinese and foreigners, one calm and peaceful Chinese tea shop caught my eyes. The aroma of tea hanging in the air was also an inducement for me to enter the shop. There, I was greeted by an array of various Chinese teas on the shelves. I talked about Chinese tea with the salesclerk over a nice cup of tea which she prepared for me.

Masaki KAKEHI, Kitakyushu, Japan

INFORMATION

COVER PROFILE



Teruko ISHIDA
Wood carving lecturer

Teruko Ishida grew up around the decorative sculpted sideboards and pillars inside the temple where she was born. Because of that, she became interested in wood carving. After turning forty and completing the raising of her children, she happened to see an impressively carved mirror using an arabesque design at a friend's home. Three years later, she started teaching wood carving to students and carrying out this kind of training in various places. Ishida speaks about the appeal of wood carving, namely, changing a thin board which has endured all factor of nature-rain, storms, heat and cold into articles. She wants her students, as she does, to feel the power from trees by engaging in wood carving. Ishida wants them through this power to live energetically.

KFAW 2009-2010 Recruitment of Foreign Correspondents

KFAW is pleased to announce its 2009-2010 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 Recruits: nine
- Qualifications:
 - ① Applicants must live in other countries outside of Japan. (However, there is no limitation as to one's nationality or sex.)
 - ② Applicants must participate for one year and turn in reports (including an application report) three times a year either in Japanese or English.
- Application:

Applicants must submit the following items to KFAW:

 - ① Reports: up to 1,200 Japanese characters or 700 English words.
Theme: "Your Daily Life: Clothing"

※If you are selected as a foreign correspondent, you must submit other two reports about "dietary life" and "living environment." You may not take reports word-for-word from the internet or print media.

 - ② Application form: You can download it from our website.
 - ③ Photographs: Photograph/s related to the report with caption. 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.)
- Honorarium: 8,000 yen per report.
- Deadline for application:

Applicants posted by or on February 27, 2009 will be accepted.

For more information, please visit our website or contact us.



For *Asian Breeze*, starting from June of 2008, we will capitalize the last names of persons at the beginning of our articles. We adopted this policy so our readers can easily distinguish last names in spite of different customs regarding the writing of family names.



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.

