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With the members of Taiwan BPW-KFAW Taiwan, Province of China Study Tour 2017

WOMEN TODAY.....p. 1

The Fifth World Conference on Women – opportunity for empowerment of girls

Ms. Mikiko Otani, Attorney-at-law / Member, UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

CURRENT ISSUES SERIES.....p. 2

Expectations of Businesses Toward Attainment of Sustainable Development Goals from the perspectives of civil society (Part 1)

Ms. Kaori Kuroda, Executive Director of CSO Network Japan

FEATURES.....pp. 3-11

KFAW Taiwan, Province of China Study Tour 2017
Gender Mainstreaming Policies for Government Officers 2017 (the Second)
KFAW International Understanding Seminars
FY2017 KFAW Asian Researchers Network Seminar / KFAW Research Report
The 27th KFAW Foreign Correspondent Reports

The Fifth World Conference on Women – opportunity for empowerment of girls

I am one of the women who have benefited from the progresses on gender equality that had been made in the series of the World Conferences on Women. I am one of the women who have been inspired and energized by hearing the stories of women activists who participated in the series of the World conferences on Women from Mexico City to Copenhagen to Nairobi to Beijing. I have learned how the series of the World Conferences on Women have contributed to the global women movement. I have learned that particularly the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing created the historical momentum for the global agenda for gender equality and gender mainstreaming. I have witnessed that the Beijing Declaration of Platform of Action as the key global policy document on gender equality has been translated to some extent into the national laws, policies and actions at the national level in some of the 12 critical areas of concern if not all. But the world situation today is far from gender equality and non-discrimination against women.

I am convinced by the rationale of the joint proposal for the Fifth World Conference on Women by the President of the United Nations General Assembly and the Secretary-General made on the International Women's day in 2012. It is high time that a world conference is convened to review the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and tackle emerging issues for women. As the joint proposal mentioned, the role and involvement of young women would add an important dimension that was not properly reflected at earlier conferences.

One area that particularly calls for the global attention is the girl child. The girl-child, despite the focus given as a stand-alone area of concern, has not received needed attention since Beijing. The Convention on the Rights of the Child guarantees the rights equally to every child. However, in reality the girl child is discriminated against from the earliest stages of life,



大谷 美紀子

Attorney-at-law,
Member, UN Committee
on the Rights of the Child

Ms. Mikiko OTANI

through her childhood and into adulthood because she is a woman and she is a child. The Convention recognizes the right of the child to be heard and to participate. However, girls are not offered the same opportunities as boys to participate in decision-making processes.

Child marriage, FGMs, trafficking, sexual exploitation and abuse including online, violence, unequal access to education and health services, increased vulnerability in humanitarian situations and migration are only some to name among all the challenges facing girls. The Fifth World Conference on Women will be a niche addressing these issues in the global gender equality framework and putting girls at the forefront on the agenda.

Today's girls are tomorrow's women. We have learned more and more the critical importance of early childhood development and investment in girls. But today's world's 1.1 billion girls were all born after the Beijing Conference. Girls, their challenges, and their concerns have not been focused on enough. It is high time that girls are given long needed global attention and the equal opportunities to participate in the global forum. We should involve girls in the global movement for gender equality as women's issues are their issues affecting their lives. Girls, by participating the whole process of the Fifth World Conference on Women, will be empowered in a big way and become agents of change.

Profile

B.A. in Law from Sophia University (1987), M.I.A. from Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs (1999) and LL.M (International Law) from University of Tokyo (2003). Admitted to Tokyo Bar Association in 1990. Actively engaged in human rights issues with focus on women, children and foreigners. First member from Japan of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (2017-).

Expectations of Businesses Toward Attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals from the Perspective of Civil Society (Part-1)



Executive Director of CSO Network Japan

Ms. Kaori KURODA

Profile

Kaori Kuroda is the Executive Director of CSO Network Japan. She also serves as Japan Director of the Asia Foundation Japan. Ms. Kuroda was a Japanese NGO Expert for developing ISO 26000 (ISO Standard for Social Responsibility) from 2007 to 2010. She currently serves as a member of the Roundtable for promoting Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) established by the SDGs Promotion Headquarters at the Prime Minister's office.

1. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

“Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda)”¹, which includes the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), was unanimously adopted at the UN Summit in September 2015. SDGs are a set of 17 goals with 169 targets to define global priorities and aspirations with a deadline of 2030.

Sustainability is the most pressing issue for our world in the 21st century. We are faced with a list of challenges, including climate change, loss of biodiversity, poverty and inequality, hunger, gender inequality, spiraling conflicts, terrorism and various humanitarian crises. These issues are interrelated and have become insurmountable challenges to sustainable development.

The key features of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs are outlined in the preamble of the Document. The goals and targets of the SDGs are integrated and indivisible and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. All countries and all stakeholders including governments, UN agencies, private businesses, civil society and others, will implement this plan in collaborative partnerships, based on the pledge made by the heads of 193 states that no one will be left behind. Importantly, the goals and targets seek the realization of human rights of all, the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

2. Deterioration of labour and human rights in global supply chains

Many stakeholders, including national and local governments, the private sector, scientists and researchers, schools, cooperatives, NGOs, and labour unions, have shown an interest in attaining the SDGs. Among them, multinational corporations seem most interested in the SDGs. While the SDGs are seen as immense business opportunities, corporations have been requested by their stakeholders to show respect for human rights, labour rights, environmental protection and to reduce CO₂ emissions throughout their worldwide operations. Indeed, deteriorating labour and human

rights in value chains have become a pressing issue in many countries.

Since the 1990s, global value chains have been extended to regions and countries where preferential tax incentives are offered to companies, regulations are loose and the labour force is cheap. Violations such as child labour, forced labour, environment damages and poor working conditions have occurred at plantations, resource extraction mines, factories and waste disposal sites. Sweatshops at Nike factories in South Asia and Southeast Asia became a symbolic issue.

After this problem came to light, many companies and business organizations developed a code of conduct for their suppliers. The United Nations Global Compact was also created in 2000 and the ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy was revised in 2006 and 2017, respectively. The United Nations Human Rights Committee adopted the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights in 2011. Although there were some improvements in human rights, some situations deteriorated despite the above guidelines and code of conducts. In April 2013, a poorly built eight-story commercial building, Rana Plaza, collapsed in Dhaka in Bangladesh, claiming more than 1,100 lives. Although some cracks were seen in the structure before the collapse, authorities forced workers to continue to work without taking any precautionary steps. This tragedy shook the very foundations of the world. In 2015, the United Kingdom Modern Slavery Act was promulgated. However, abuse of labour rights and human rights still continues to exist in global value chains.

Japan also has a number of issues relating to labour rights and human rights at workplaces. Power harassment and sexual harassment over work, gender wage gaps, no equal compensation for equal work between regular employees and irregular employees, and discrimination. In recent years, the Japanese government has accepted an increased number of foreign workers, including “technical intern trainees” in order to deal with the country’s labour shortage. However, human rights violations of foreign workers has become a serious issue.

¹ The document can be downloaded from the following URL:
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld/publication>

3. Promotion of decent work

Goal 5 of the SDGs is to “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.” Goal 8 is to “promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all”. Target 7 of Goal 8 is to “take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including the recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.”

These are the first steps for corporations and all entities to take when contributing to the SDGs. It is strongly hoped that corporations will actively engage with not only employees and labour unions but also with external stakeholders in order to achieve the SDGs. Such stakeholders include nonprofit organizations supporting and defending the human rights of those who are “left behind” as well as investors who have a heightened interest in corporate behavior on climate change and human rights.

KFAW Taiwan, Province of China Study Tour 2017

KFAW organized the “Taiwan, Province of China Study Tour 2017: Learning about Women’s Empowerment in Taiwan, Province of China” from January 17 (Wed) to 20 (Sat), 2018. Eighteen women from all different walks of life visited the cities of Taipei and Taichung to explore the background of activities of Taiwanese women and think about issues surrounding women in both Japan and Taiwan, Province of China. After returning to Japan, a briefing session was held where the participants shared the knowledge they learned on the study tour with the residents of Kitakyushu.

Tour participants, Ms. Yumi MORIMOTO and Ms. Makiko GONDO, share their reports on their activities during the study tour below.

Schedule

January 17 (Wed)

Leave Japan, visit Japan-Taiwan, Province of China Exchange Association's Taipei Office

January 18 (Thu)

Visit Taiwan, Province of China Women's Center

Visit Awakening Foundation

Social gathering with Taiwan, Province of China BPW

January 19 (Fri)

Visit daycare center

Visit senior citizens' center

Social gathering with Taichung BPW

January 20 (Sat)

Return to Japan



Learning from the History of Winning Women’s Rights in Taiwan, Province of China

Ms. Yumi MORIMOTO, Kitakyushu City Assembly Member

I think that the Taiwan, Province of China Study Tour was an exciting opportunity to learn about the social status of women and how far gender equality has progressed in Taiwan, Province of China, which is experiencing remarkable economic development. I was a bit nervous about my first trip to Taiwan, Province of China but I was able to gain a wealth of knowledge about Taiwan, Province of China as a whole and the situation surrounding women at a preliminary study group. I was also able to meet the other participants before we departed, so I was able to approach the tour with confidence.

What impressed me the most from this tour was the detailed story by Ms. Chen, a researcher, who told us about the history of how women gained their rights in Taiwan, Province of China during our visit to the Taiwan, Province of China Women’s Center. This is a women’s center established by the Taiwanese government to promote gender equality and is managed by the Foundation for Women’s Rights Promotion and Development

(FWRPD). It seems that women’s centers have been established in each province.

In Taiwan, Province of China as well, the status of women was as low as in Japan, but it seems that the protection of women’s rights gained momentum in 1988, the year after martial law was lifted and the country’s democratization policies started to take effect, as the women’s liberation movement started to take on a life of its own and the government positioned gender equality within its main policies. In 1996, the civil code was enacted, followed by a law to prevent sexual violence in 1997 and the domestic violence prevention law in 1998. In 2001, the Gender Equality in Employment Act, a gender equality labor law, was enacted, followed by the Gender Equity Education Act in 2004. In politics, the proportion of women parliamentarians is higher than 30% as a result of the introduction of a quota system (33.9% in

the 2012 legislative election).

I think the acquisition of women's rights in Taiwan, Province of China has been promoted as a gender equality policy where women who were long oppressed have taken advantage of democratization to raise their voices and expand the women's liberation movement, to which the government responded. If Japan increases the number of women

parliamentarians through the introduction of a quota system, it may be possible to put pressure on the government to strengthen gender equality policies.



At Taiwan, Province of China Women's Center

Thinking about the Social Advancement of Women in Japan and Taiwan, Province of China

Ms. Makiko GONDO

On this Taiwan, Province of China Study Tour that I took part in, I could feel the power of women. It was an amazing opportunity to think about women's rights and social advancement. In Taiwan, Province of China, I learned that many women played a role in advancing women's rights in society in a short period of time. I would like to mention my feelings and thoughts through



Food stall supporting Taiwan, Province of China's dining out culture

the entire tour on the fact that although a lot of people in Japan are also committed to the social advancement of women, despite their best efforts, the advancement of women in Japan is behind that of Taiwan, Province of China.

I think that there are two elements that must be addressed regarding the social advancement of women: the workplace and home. There were a number of opportunities to learn about support at home during this tour. I was particularly impressed by the fact that eating out is mainstream for Taiwanese families and think that women not needing to do housework at home has had an impact on the social advancement of women.

I feel that, in Japan, the preferences of Japanese men towards women is one reason interfering with the social advancement of women at home. Many men still say their ideal marriage partner is a woman who is a homemaker.

Because there are a number of families where mothers are full-time housewives and many mothers also do housework even though they are also working, the children who grow up with this image think that it is natural for a woman to do both housework and child rearing. This may be one reason that is preventing the social advancement of women. When I spoke to a mother who is a nursery school teacher, it seems that even when children play house, the child who plays the father goes off to work, and the child playing the mother does housework and takes care of the children. I thought that children will need to be educated from a young age so that the day will come where the child playing the role of the father when the children play house will also do the household chores and take care of the children. I also strongly felt the necessity to not only change the way women think, but to also change the mentality of men in the future.

I hope to be able to have an opportunity to create an environment where it is easy for women to work at a company where I will be working in the future by taking advantage of the many things I have learned on this tour.



Tour of daycare center in Taichung

KFAW's Note

We visited the Taiwan, Province of China Women's Center and the Awakening Foundation where we learned about the background and current issues behind the social advancement of Taiwanese women. At a nursery school and senior citizens' facility, we also learned what role these facilities are playing to help women continue to be able to work. Through discussions with members of the Taiwan, Province of China and Taichung BPW club, we were able to feel the strong pride women working in Taiwan, Province of China have towards their jobs and the spirit of these women who highly value their families and communities.

Things in the backdrop of the social advancement of women in Taiwan, Province of China...women who stood up to change the status quo. High level of awareness towards gender equality passed down to younger generations. Raising interest in women's political participation through the introduction of a quota system. Dining out culture that reduces housework and the provision of nursing and childcare by foreign domestic workers.

Although the history and background of Japan and Taiwan, Province of China are different, the feeling to work together with couples, families, and the community to create an environment where everyone can live comfortably is the same. We would like to make use of the suggestions we have gained from the Taiwan, Province of China Study Tour in our respective activities and actions in the future.



With the members of the Taichung BPW club (in red uniforms) at the Senior citizens' center

“Gender Mainstreaming Policies for Government Officers 2017” (the Second)

KFAW provides training programs twice a year to government officers who are in charge of gender mainstreaming in the central and local governments of developing countries. This program is commissioned by Kyushu International Center (JICA Kyushu), Japan International Cooperation Agency.

The second program for FY 2017 was conducted from January 15th (Mon.) through February 13th (Tue.), 2018 for eight officials from seven countries, namely Afghanistan, Bhutan, Cambodia, Lesotho, the Maldives, Papua New Guinea, and South Sudan.

The program, comprised of lectures, workshops and site visits, was designed to help the trainees gain a comprehensive understanding of concepts, methods and theories concerning gender mainstreaming. During the training period, it snowed several times in Yahatahigashi-ku, Kitakyushu City where JICA Kyushu is located. Also, central Tokyo saw over 20cm of snow while the participants were visiting the capital. Some of the participants who experienced a snowfall for the first time in their lives enjoyed snowball fighting in front of their accommodations from early in the morning.



Visit to an elementary school (Class observation)

Despite the succession of bitterly cold days during the training period, the participants truly devoted themselves to the hot issue of promoting gender mainstreaming.

The followings are impressions three of the participants had of the training program.



South Sudan

Ms. SAEED Sawsan Omer Ismail

I am sure the knowledge gained and lessons learnt will be implemented and it will contribute towards gender equality and development of our country. We look forward for more chances and special consideration for South Sudan.



Cambodia

Ms. OUK Kosomakesey

I am so appreciate. I do hope that all my knowledge gained from this course is important and useful for applying to achieve the future plans of the Ministry of Women’s Affairs to improve women status and to promote gender mainstreaming in Cambodia. I would like to have deeply thanks to the government of Japan, JICA, KFAW, Move, lecturers, coordinator and Japanese people I had met staying in Japan for giving me warmly, and friendly.



Lesotho

Ms. MAFISA Ntaoleng Justina

I have learned a lot from gender mainstreaming program, and have obtained enough tools to improve my work of making sure that men and women benefit equally to any policies and programs.

"Society and Women in Thailand, a Country of Smiles"

Thailand's national flag. Red symbolizes the Thai people, white depicts religion, and blue represents the royal family.



Date/Time Saturday, January 27, 2018 14:00-16:00
Venue Small Seminar Room, 5th Floor, Kitakyushu Gender Equality Center, MOVE
Lecturer Mr. Hironori TOMIMATSU, Osaka Office, Tourism Authority of Thailand
Ms. Wasana WADA, Thai Language Instructor, HAKATA Language School
Participants 48

Mr. Hironori TOMIMATSU, Osaka Office, Tourism Authority of Thailand

Thailand is a tourist nation located in Southeast Asia. Last year, 36 million travelers from all over the world and 1.54 million tourists from Japan visited Bangkok. Thailand is home to Buddhist temples, such as Wat Pho, ancient ruins, such as the Ayutthaya ruins, and beautiful beach resorts. A culture that enjoys festivals, Thailand is home to many events, such as water pouring festivals.

Ties between the people of Thailand and the royal family run deep; when King Rama the IX died in 2016, crowds of people came to his funeral to bid him one last goodbye.

More than 95% of the people in Thailand are Buddhist, and religion is a big part of their lives. The Thai people believe in the circle of birth, death, and rebirth and that they are here in the present thanks to virtue in a previous life. The Thai people practice *thábuay* (ทำบุญ, accumulation of good deeds) not to improve their lives now, but to raise up their own soul in the next life. The greatest act of filial piety in a family with boys is to become a Buddhist priest for their mothers.

No one in Thailand has a look of annoyance on their faces at the presence of children in either the workplace or public spaces. There are many workplaces where you can bring children. Thailand is society where children are raised by society as a whole, not because someone is a woman or a man.

Ms. Wasana WADA, Thai Language Instructor, HAKATA Language School

After I came to Japan, I married a Japanese man and had children. What I found most difficult in Japan was raising my children. My husband, who is an office worker, returned too late on weekdays from work, so if my child got sick during the day, I had no one to depend on and had to work hard on my own. In Thailand, we have something called "Family Day", where everyone treasures the time with their families. Does Japan have "Family Day"?

I think that Japanese mothers have too many things to do: for work, housework, and school. There are also no places where children can be looked after other than nursery schools and at their grandparents' homes. It is normal to raise children, but it is very stressful if there is no one to help look after them.

Japanese and Thais have very different ways of raising children. Thai fathers practice *thábuay* (ทำบุญ) (accumulation



Ms. Wasana WADA (left) and Mr. Hironori TOMIMATSU (right)

of good deeds) for their wives and children. Since parents are the Buddhas of the house, the children must respect and take care of their parents and listen to what they say. Schools in Thailand also invite parents to "Father's Day" and "Mother's Day" events to express their gratitude. However, Japanese children do not listen to their parents very well.

In Thailand, we also have "Teacher's Day", which is not practiced in Japan. School is considered to be a "second home", where the teacher acts as a substitute for a child's parents. So when a student passes in front of a teacher, they must always put their hands together to express respect and appreciation. In Thailand, children are taught from the time they are small to put their hands together and are told they are being discourteous if they do not do so.

I have faced various difficulties since I came to Japan. If there are any foreign nationals that are having difficulties in Japan, I would like you to support them. I think it is important to understand each other, regardless of nationality or gender.



Thailand's national flower, Golden Shower

The 29th KFAW Research Reports

Date: Sunday, March 25, 2018, 14:00-16:00

Venue: Small Seminar Room, 5th Floor, Kitakyushu Municipal Gender Equality Center, MOVE

Participants: 38

KFAW's visiting researchers conduct research studies on a wide range of issues and challenges regarding gender and gender equality around the world, focusing on the Asia-Pacific region. By examining various issues in the context of global developments from the international perspective, the research studies aim to clarify challenges facing Japan, thereby contributing to the realization of a gender equal society in Kitakyushu.

Results of the two years of research studies carried out in FYs 2016-2017 were reported by the visiting researchers.

Report

"Current State and Challenges in Accepting and Training Foreign Care Workers in Japan: Analysis from a Gender Perspective"

[The Visiting Researchers] Rie KAGE (Specially Appointed Lecturer, Center for International Exchange, Tokyo University of Social Welfare)

Yukari MAEYAMA (Associate Professor, Saga Women's Junior College)

The visiting researchers reported on the analysis of the choice of caregivers from a gender perspective as follows: (1) Even males requiring nursing care tend to choose female caregivers. (2) Females (especially premenopausal women) requiring nursing care tend to choose female caregivers. (3) In some cases, females requiring nursing care choose male caregivers on the grounds of their physical strength and stability. (4) Those in need of nursing care become dependent on caregivers, as they continue to face difficulties in maintaining functional independence in various situations of daily lives until they die. This eventually makes them feel indebted and fall under the control of caregivers (i.e., inferiority in social status). (5) Because of this sense of indebtedness, those in need of nursing care prefer to be cared for by persons in inferior status. In a male-dominated society, for instance, they choose female caregivers (i.e., husbands choose their wives; mothers choose their

daughters). Likewise, along with advances in globalization, they tend to choose foreign caregivers. With the advent of the super-aged society, Japan has begun to accept human resources in the field of nursing care from abroad because of difficulties in securing sufficient personnel within the country. Against this backdrop, the visiting researchers reported on the findings of a survey conducted at nursing-care facilities in Japan that accept foreign care worker candidates, as well as of a survey of students at a nursing college in Indonesia. They also introduced a case example of a school in Japan that trains foreign students studying to become certified care workers.



Lecturer Rie KAGE

Report

"Human Rights of Sexual Minorities and Civil Society in Asia: With a Focus on the Comparative Study of Taiwan, Province of China, Singapore, and Japan"

[Visiting Researchers] Keiko TAMURA (Professor, Faculty of Law, The University of Kitakyushu)

Kyouko HIKITA (Associate Professor, Kagoshima Prefectural College)

The visiting researchers reported on the historical analysis of sexual minority rights movements in Taiwan, Province of China. In this context, Taiwan, Province of China's Constitutional Court (the highest court) ruled in March 2017 that the prohibition of same-sex marriage was unconstitutional, and declared that same-sex marriage would become legal by May 2019, paving the way for Taiwan, Province of China to be the first place in Asia to legalize same-sex marriage.

In Singapore, Pink Dot rally has been held annually to show support for the freedom to love regardless of sexual orientation. Since its inauguration in 2009, it has seen a steadily rising attendance over the years. In 2016, the organizer announced that the annual rally was no longer in the phase of trying to increase its turnout, and instead they would undertake new activities including legal consultation for sexual minorities. On the other hand, as exemplified by anti-Pink Dot movements such as the Love Singapore Network and Wear White campaign that promote traditional family values, efforts to promote LGBT rights are facing obstacles and have not made much progress so far.

In Japan, the first legal sex reassignment surgery was performed in 1998. Also, Act on Special Cases in Handling Gender Status for Persons with Gender Identity Disorder was enacted in 2003 as legislative response to the growing trend of sexual diversity. Under the act, people are allowed to alter gender status on family registers on condition that they meet the following strict requirements: being not less than 20 years of age; being not currently married; and having no child who is a minor, among others. Meanwhile, a bill designed to eliminate discrimination against sexual minorities was submitted to the Diet in 2016. However, it still remains under deliberation.

Under such circumstances, some municipalities have started to officially recognize same-sex partnerships since 2015. Therefore, much attention is given to these local initiatives, to see if they will exert certain influence on national politics.



Professor Keiko TAMURA

Selective Separate-Surname System from the Viewpoint of Women's Human Rights: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and Families

Date: Sunday, February 4, 2018, 14:00-16:00
Venue: Small Seminar Room, 5th Floor, Kitakyushu Municipal Gender Equality Center, MOVE
Lecturer: Miho OMI (Professor, School of Global Humanities and Social Sciences, Nagasaki University)
Participants: 33

In December 2015, Japan's Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the provision of Article 750 of the Civil Code, which stipulates that "a husband and wife shall adopt the surname of the husband or wife in accordance with that which is decided at the time of marriage". The Supreme Court cited the following four reasons as the basis for its ruling: (1) It may be reasonable for a family to determine a single surname. And it would be excessive to argue that the interest in maintaining, even after marriage, an individual's credit, reputation, fame or the like that have been established before marriage can be regarded as part of personal rights. (2) As a result of discussions between the persons who are to marry, overwhelming majority of married couples choose the husband's surname. (3) Article 750 of the Civil Code does not impose any restriction on marriage itself. (4) The same-surname system has long been well established in Japanese society.

The ruling was made by the Grand Bench of the Supreme Court comprised of all 15 justices. And it is noteworthy that all of the three female justices expressed opinions as follows: (1) Sufficient reasonable grounds exist for women to wish to continue to use their pre-marriage surnames after marriage in that there has been an increase in cases where adopting the husband's surname has negative impacts on women's legal interests including their business achievements, results, etc. (2) The choice of the husband's surname is based on the fact that women are placed in weak positions socially, economically, and domestically. (3) Allowing no exceptions to the same-surname system violates individual dignity and the essential equality of the sexes. (4) The form for notification of marriage requires a couple to describe which

surname will be used after marriage, thereby imposing unreasonable requirements on freedom to marry.

Given the fact that 96 percent of all married couples choose the husband's surname upon marriage, Prof. Omi pointed out that the same-surname system would constitute indirect discrimination against women.

Aside from the Supreme Court ruling, there were some promising developments in this regard. For instance, it became possible to register executives' by-names along with their legal names in the commercial registry (February 2015), and judges and conciliation commissioners were allowed to use pre-marriage surnames (September 2017). Also, starting in 2018, it will be possible to register by-names along with legal names in the residence registry, the social security and tax number system, and passports. As such, it is expected that women will be able to use their pre-marriage surnames or list them as by-names along with legal names on various occasions.



Professor Miho Omi

Meeting Organized to Exchange Opinions Regarding Promotion of Women's Participation and Advancement in Manufacturing Companies in Kitakyushu

Date: Thursday, February 8, 2018, 10:00 - 11:30
Venue: Meeting Room, 3rd Floor, Kitakyushu Municipal Gender Equality Center, MOVE
Agenda: Report (1) Research Report on Women's Participation and Advancement in the Workplace and Business Management, as well as on Current Situation Regarding the Promotion of Women's Participation and Advancement in Manufacturing Companies in Kitakyushu (Professor Hidetoshi YOSHIMURA, The University of Kitakyushu)
Report (2) Report on "Project to Formulate Strategies to Facilitate Unemployed Women's Active Participation in the Workforce" by the City of Kitakyushu (Commissioned by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications)
Report (3) "Support/Subsidy Systems to Promote Women's Participation and Advancement in the Workplace and Work-Life Balance" (Report (2) & (3): Women's Active Participation Support Division, City of Kitakyushu)
Exchange of opinions with participating companies (concerning the present state of recruiting and appointing women, and future efforts and challenges in pushing forward women's participation and advancement in the workplace)

Participating Companies: Kogetsudo Co., Ltd., Shinko Corporation, Nishikai Co., Ltd., Mangyoku Ltd.

(Dis)Empowering Filipino Women Domestic Workers in Japan

Ms. Arisa JUNIO (Philippines)

The migration of labour has been economically beneficial to the Philippines and Japan. Despite the colonial history of the countries, the Philippines and Japan are in an economic bilateral agreement through the Japan-Philippine Economic Partnership Agreement (JPEPA) that mutually benefits both countries to cope with the changing demands of globalization in the international community.

The remittances being sent by Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) to their families serve as an important source of investment in the Philippines (Ordinario 2012: 1). Migration fuels the Philippine economy through its Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs). The International Organization for Migration (IOM) classified OFWs by occupational categories, and service workers ranked first on the list of migrant workers. The service sector, primarily dominated by domestic workers, is highly associated with women (IOM 2013).

Japan, on the other hand, lacks labour force due to its declining birth rate and ageing population. To address these concerns, the Japanese government is restructuring its labour market to be structurally dependent on legal and illegal foreign migrant workers (Ball et al 2002: 1016). In June 2014, the Cabinet suggested accepting foreign domestic workers, or house keepers, for support of Japanese working women in National Strategic Special Zones (Hayakawa 2015: 15). This has led to the amendment of the Act on National Strategic Special Zones to modify the immigration regulation in accepting domestic workers (Hayakawa 2015: 15). According to a published article against the bill, Susumu Murakoshi, President of the Japan Federation of Bar Associations contended that the domestic workers who will be hired are vulnerable women (Hayakawa 2015: 15).



Filipino Domestic Worker, photo taken by Akira Kodaka (2017) from <<https://asia.nikkei.com/Business/Companies/Filipino-housekeepers-Japan-dream>>

The Philippine government is gearing up towards exporting labour to countries in need of workers to embrace neo-liberal ideals to economically benefit the country. In spite of its intention to improve the lives of the Filipino people, the labour migration policy attempts to hide the visible layer of injustice to the migrant workers, especially to those women workers engaged in services. Despite the existence of laws and bilateral agreements between the host and sending countries, Filipino women migrant workers are vulnerable to discrimination due to the mere fact that they are: a) Filipino, and b) women. These two elements of being a migrant worker perpetuate the racialized and biased idea on women's work that devalues their worth.

Filipino women migrant workers in Japan have a negative history in the entertainment industry as Overseas Performing

Profile

I am currently pursuing my master's degree at Human Rights, Gender and Conflict Studies: Social Justice Perspectives, the International Institute of Social Studies in The Hague, Netherlands. I am working on my research paper regarding sexuality and how it operates in existing disaster risk reduction frameworks on vulnerability and resiliency.



Artists (OPAs) in nightclubs. The OPAs experience various forms of discrimination such as confiscation of passports and other documents, contract violations—from OPAs to hostessing jobs—and low wages given after the contract, language and cultural barriers, and the harassing nature of work. This stereotype has been reinforced by most Japanese people towards Filipino women migrant workers.

In addition to the historical employment of Filipino women migrant workers in Japan, the familial setting of these women in the Philippines adds to the multiple layer of their marginalization in both countries. Filipinos are known to have strong familial ties and acquire mutual support among family members through *utang na loob* (debt of gratitude). This culture strictly holds to women family members working as migrant workers abroad, though it may apply to unmarried young women workers slightly differently from married women domestic workers.

Unmarried Filipina migrant workers, in general, have their obligation to financially support their immediate (and in some cases, extended) family members in the Philippines. As a daughter who has debt of gratitude towards her family, she has to contribute to all kinds of expenses incurred by the family, and it is quite typical of unmarried Filipina migrant women to provide financial support for sending one of her siblings (or extended relatives) to school.

Married domestic workers with children, on the other hand, are much more willing to sacrifice themselves and put up with the maltreatments they experience at work to enable her family to lead a 'decent life'. In a case where both the father and the mother are working abroad, she repays the debt of gratitude to the extended family member who takes care of her children by financially supporting them. In order to meet the demands of her own children and extended family members, she has to work multiple jobs despite being paid minimum amounts, whether documented or undocumented, just to send money and be considered as a daughter and mother who returns *utang na loob*.

In the context of the Philippines and Japan, Filipino women domestic workers are affected by the state-inflicted marginalization that reinforces discrimination against them because they are women. The historical employment of Filipino women in Japan as OPAs inculcated a derogatory perception towards them. Thus, engaging these women in domestic work would only establish discriminatory value towards their work such as low-wage and unvalued work.

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Chronic Underrepresentation of Women in Sri Lankan Politics

Mr. Nishan WIJETUNGE (Sri Lanka)

I am a Sri Lankan who is balancing two careers as an academic as well as an architect. Currently, I am an Honorary Research Fellow at the School of Architecture, Liverpool University, U.K. Exposure to my mother's extensive career as a government civil servant - with whom I share a strong conviction for gender equality - as well as my own role and experience in the gender-prejudiced academic and professional spheres have placed me at a vantage point to study and write about gender issues.



As a historic kingdom, Sri Lanka has had many women rulers in its illustrious past. In the modern times, as Ceylon, it was one of the first nations to see the establishment of universal adult suffrage (as early as 1931), when women also received the right to vote. Irrespective of such encouraging evidence, women have suffered with a chronic underrepresentation in the country's modern political arena over the decades. Democracy was introduced to the island by the British at a time of Victorian values, where male dominance was part and parcel of it. It is sad to observe that more or less the same value system has been perpetuated well into the 21st century in vain. The golden opportunity that was afforded by independence did not yield conspicuous reformations in Sri Lankan politics, and the feeble political status of women remained unaltered.

stereotyped women as 'home makers' and men on the contrary, as 'leaders'. The National Human Development Report (NHDR) highlights how the youth of the nation are aware neither of challenges faced by women in leadership positions, nor of how gender shapes identity determining one's ability to perform. In the face of such prejudice, even the most competent women prefer to remain within their culturally-drawn comfort zones, well away from popular politics.

Over the years, *Women and Media Collective* as well as many other women's groups have lobbied for policy recommendations to the 20th amendment with the intention of increasing the gender's parliamentary seats to 25%. The mandatory quota reservation that the aforesaid parties seek to establish has met with wider criticism. The critics postulate that the number of women experienced enough to make the expected representation is unrealistic, and if this number is to be maintained artificially, it will severely disadvantage more qualified and experienced men. Another point raised is that just because spaces are reserved as electoral seats or on nomination lists, this does not guarantee that women will contest and win. Although sought as a remedial measure to upwardly mobilize women in the political ranks in a situation where a corrupt and gender-biased political culture is prevalent, some women see such a discretionary quota system as insulting. Although it is not a panacea, such a measure will improve the gender's visibility in the political sphere as a starting point at least. An alternative 'non-quota initiative' has been also suggested that entails aspects from funding women (with lesser networks) for their political campaigns, to helping to build their capacity to run campaigns alone, etc.



Political campaign meeting of a female candidate running for a local government office

This anomaly, in fact, has been a big talking point in Sri Lankan politics recently. Amidst the discussions of promising political reforms recently mediated – in the form of the 20th amendment to the constitution –, increasing the representation of women has been widely discussed. Although the country produced the first ever woman prime minister of the world in the 1960s, and saw a woman executive president in power in the 1990s, as well as some women holding powerful ministerial positions over the years, the number of women in politics has been dismally low. It is also ironic that the salient underlying factor behind the appointment of a bulk of the aforementioned was sympathy – after their husbands or fathers fell victim to political assassinations – other than their own merit.

The progression made by Sri Lankan women in the sphere of education over the decades has made very little positive impact on their political standing. Their 52% population is underrepresented by 6.5% in parliamentary, 6% in provincial council and 2% in local government seats. The gendered politics in Sri Lanka has historically

The chronic political underrepresentation of women has over the years manifested in numerous ways. Women-specific issues have remained painfully unaddressed in Sri Lanka for so long. On one hand, in the aftermath of the civil war that saw traditional gender structures crumble owing to the perishing of hordes of men, women finally have the opportunity to step up. On the other, in an academically-empowered situation as it is currently prevalent – where Sri Lanka's tertiary education sector saw women contributing to 80% and 50% respectively, in the vital fields of law and medicine in the recent years – they are certainly capable.

More representations by women in politics would surely encourage diversity of views in the government that would in turn, result in challenging the *status quo* of gender discrimination in the nation as a whole. Perhaps, increasing the number of women would reflect positively on the notion of 'good governance' that was in fact, the trump card of the current government. Only time can assess how positively women can influence this imperative practice that has eluded politics of Sri Lanka for so long.

“Tell Us More! Swedish Dad” ~ Life in Northern Europe & Japan ~

Sweden's national flag. Blue represents lakes and yellow symbolizes gold or the shining sun.



Date/Time Saturday, February 24, 2018 14:00-16:00
Venue Large Seminar Room, 5th Floor, Kitakyushu Gender Equality Center, MOVE
Contents Outline: “What Type of Country is Sweden!?”
 ESD Promotion Practical Work, School of Regional Development,
 The University of Kitakyushu
 Lecturer: Mr. Joachim KITAZAWA, Ikea Fukuoka Shingu
 Facilitator: Mr. Yoichi FURUNO, Child-rearing specialist

Participants 55

“What Type of Country is Sweden!?”

Students from ESD Promotion Practical Work, School of Regional Development, The University of Kitakyushu

Sweden is a “social welfare state” that has created a system to allow all people to live with a sense of security. The country’s child-rearing system, in particular, is substantial, with the longest paid childcare leave in the world at 480 days. Fathers are required to take at least three months of childcare leave. Tuition for education is free from primary school up to university. The strong presence of immigrants in the country mean that diversity and independence are respected. In Swedish society, two incomes are common, and the percentage of full-time housewives is only 2%. Most women return to work after they marry or have children because an environment has been created that allows women to work without difficulty, such as the existence of a system with reduced working hours. As a result, gender equality and the number of women entering political office are also the highest in the world.



Presentation by the students

Lecture by Swedish dad, Mr. Joachim KITAZAWA,
 facilitated by Child-rearing specialist, Mr. Yoichi FURUNO

The most surprising point about raising children in Japan is the number of times you have to visit the hospital. In Sweden, people do not go to the hospital very often because there are few hospitals and they do not like taking medicine. Even after giving birth, mothers come home as soon as possible, as long as there are no problems with the health of the mother or child.

In Sweden, many people drop their children off in nursery school at the age of 1 1/2 when childcare leave finished. However, unlike Japan, no one is told that they



Mr. Joachim KITAZAWA and Mr. Yoichi FURUNO

cannot place their child in daycare. In years when a lot of children are born, the government opens enough nurseries to accommodate the number of children.

There are four types of consumption taxes ranging from 0% to 25%. The tax rate changes depending on the level of need. Income tax is also high, with 33% deducted from salaries. Pensions and social insurance fees are 100% the responsibility of companies. Therefore, unless someone is a good fit for a company, they will not be hired, which means that the unemployment rate is also high. The tax burden and prices are high, so it is hard to make a living unless both partners work equally, share housework, and raise children together.

Few people work overtime in Sweden. People who work overtime given the impression that they are not able to do their work. People also do not stay long at one company. Most work for three to five years to acquire skills and use those skills to look for their next workplace. Salaries rise accordingly. There is no difference between men and women at work. People in Sweden do not do much overtime, nor do they spend much time on housework. This may be a factor in being able to take time to be with their children.



* This seminar was held in conjunction with the Swedish Embassy's Traveling Photography Exhibition, “Swedish Dads” (February 20-27, 2018). We would like to thank all those who visited.