

Asian Breeze

No. **87**
February
2020

KITAKYUSHU FORUM ON ASIAN WOMEN (KFAW) February 2020 Semiannual Publication



Kokura Castle, Kitakyushu City

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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and Gender Equality

December 18, 2019 was the 40th anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Convention). One day before that memorable day, very disappointing news came in. It was reported that *The Gender Gap Report 2020*, published by the World Economic Forum (WEF), ranked Japan at 121st out of 153 countries, the lowest ever (110th out of 144 countries in 2018). Needless to mention, Japan is the lowest of the seven major countries (G7).

Japan, the world's third largest economy, is one of the very high human development countries, with the ranking of 19th out of 189 countries in the Human Development Index which is measured by life expectancy, GNI per capita, and years of schooling. However, in the gender gap index that analyzes gender disparities in the four fields of economics, education, health, and politics, Japan is ranked at 121st among 153 countries as described above. In particular, Japan is ranked at 115th for economic participation and opportunity and 144th for political empowerment.

With regards to gender equality, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) reviews the status of women's rights in each country, and also reviews the progress of Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Gender Equality. CEDAW strongly urges countries, in its concluding observations after constructive dialogues, to perceive women as drivers of sustainable development throughout the process of implementing the SDGs and to adopt appropriate policies and strategies in order to attain *de jure* and *de facto* gender equality.

How is, then, the achievement of gender equality in Japan evaluated? According to *Sustainable Development Report 2019* issued by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network's, Japan's overall achievement of the SDGs is ranked at 15th out of 162 countries, which seems not so bad. However, the score for Goal 5 is about 55 points out of 100 points. Compared to other goals such as Goal 1 (Poverty) and Goal 4 (Education), which get almost 100 points, the achievement in Goal 5 (Gender Equality) is very low, and that situation has not changed. Therefore, Goal 5 is pointed out as "major challenges" for Japan with flagged red. CEDAW also recommended Japan to adopt necessary strategies to



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achieve *de facto* gender equality, including considering temporary special measures, such as introducing statutory quotas and reducing gender pay gaps.

It may seem that Japan's reputation is too low. However, it might not be well understood in Japan that Article 1 of the CEDAW Convention prohibits not only legal discrimination but also *de facto* discrimination, and Article 2 prohibits gender discrimination committed not only by public institutions but also by private companies and individuals.

Some may argue that the issue of gender equality has nothing to do with men, or that taking a policy in favor of women is a reverse discrimination against men. However, Article 4 of the CEDAW Convention stipulates that "temporary special measures aimed at accelerating *de facto* equality between men and women shall not be considered discrimination (against men)". Therefore, until the day when *de facto* gender equality is achieved, it is necessary to aim for *de facto* equality by taking temporary special measures in favor of women while gaining the understanding of men.

No country in the world has yet achieved *de facto* gender equality. And there is backlash against gender equality around the world. Therefore, gender equality and the empowerment of women for that purpose are challenges that must be tackled not only by Japan but also by the world as a whole.

Profile

Member of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Professor of Asia University

She earned a Ph.D. from International Christian University in 1997. She was a Programme Officer of UNDP from 1987 to 1989 and a Visiting Scholar at Columbia University from 2005 to 2006.

Fields of Research: International Law, UN Studies.

The Core Aspirations of SDGs and Goal 5 as its Leverage Point (Part -2)



President and CEO, SDG Partners, Inc.

Mr. TASE Kazuo

Profile

Born in 1967. Joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan in 1992. UN Policy Division, UN Administrative Division, Personal Assistant for Mrs. Ogata Sadako as the Chair of UN Commission on Human Security. Served as Chief, Human Security Unit, OCHA between 2005 and 2014. Director at Deloitte Tohmatsu Consulting between 2014 and 2017, then founded SDG Partners, Inc. Currently the President and CEO of SDG Partners, Inc.

Year 2020 is here. It is the Olympic year, as well as the SDGs' 5th anniversary. The SDGs have come to dominate an important position in Japanese society over the past five years; local governments are starting to take the SDGs seriously, and small and medium-sized enterprises are grappling with the SDGs and ESG investment in order to hire talented individuals.

At the same time, however, these efforts often fall short. The insufficiency of such efforts is most apparent in the area of gender equality, as the World Economic Forum's 2019 Gender Gap Index ranked Japan 121st. Japanese women's political and economic participation are clearly lagging behind. In this article, I demonstrate that Goal 5 of the SDGs is the "key" for Japan to achieve all other SDGs.

It has been increasingly clear that many people who deal with the SDGs overlook the "linkage" between the goals. All goals are, in fact, linked with one another. Annual corporate reports often exclusively focus on connecting the company's businesses with each individual SDG (*mapping*). Yet, they fail to critically analyze the company's *outputs*, i.e., the social benefits and ills produced by its businesses, and to measure its *impacts* in transforming the society. Contrastingly, the idea of "linkage," or the system of "SDG domino effect," has deeply taken root in the work of international organizations such as the UN. For instance, the WFP regards the provision of school lunch in impoverished villages as the "key" trigger of a positive chain reaction which eventually leads to poverty reduction in the community. In other words, rightly approaching the "key" SDG could set off a series of improvements in multiple SDG areas. I refer to this "key" as the "leverage point" for change.

I believe that Goal 5 is this leverage point, which will trigger the SDG domino in Japan. Gender gap constitutes a direct impediment to achieving Good Health (Goal 3), Equality Education (Goal 4), Decent Work (Goal 8), Innovation (Goal 9), Reduced Inequalities (Goal 10), and Peace (Goal 16). Gender inequality

inevitably affects the achievement of all other SDGs. It is also the outcome of various social issues.

Numerous reports published by research institutes argue that "Japanese women's rightful participation in the labor market would dramatically increase Japan's GDP in the next 20 years." I agree. In order to deal with our declining population and stagnant economy, we need to put women's ability in full use. Capitalizing on the potentials of Japanese women holds far greater importance to this country than mere work-style reform or innovation.

Yet, realizing Goal 5 requires a transformation of values. We must modify the societal values, and especially those of men, in order to accommodate the new era. How do we do this? Is it possible to transform the persistent gender stereotypes held by male company executives? Here are my two suggestions.

First, do not only learn from the young, but also include them. Second, create a dynamic combination of short-, mid-, and long-term strategies. Young people today embrace very different worldviews and mindsets from the older generations. Some have faced and overcome severe difficulties, including the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake, and their core professional aspiration is to "be useful to the society." We have the responsibility to develop these young individuals' ability to a full bloom. As for the second point, combining the elements of *incentive*, *penalty*, and education with different time axis can gradually change human behaviors. For instance, the decrease in the number of smokers in Japan was an outcome of an effective combination of these measures. I believe that a similar strategy would be useful to solve gender inequality.

SDG 5 is the key to changing the people and the society. It is critical that we remain committed to achieving this goal.

The 30th Kitakyushu Conference on Asian Women

Involve Everyone in Creating the Future

- Toward the 25th Anniversary of the World Conference on Women in Beijing

Date : Saturday, October 19, 2019 10:00-16:30

Venue : Large Seminar Room, etc., Kitakyushu Municipal Gender Equality Center, MOVE

The 30th Kitakyushu Conference on Asian Women was held under the theme, "Involve Everyone in Creating the Future – Toward the 25th Anniversary of the World Conference on Women in Beijing". The keynote speech was delivered by Prof. Patricia Licuanan, Chair of the 1995 Women's Conference in Beijing, who spoke on the theme of "Beijing on My Mind". Foreign correspondents from Bhutan and Indonesia also delivered local reports. The afternoon program engaged participants in active discussions in sessions on three themes—"What It Means to Work", "Living on the Earth", and "Think about Future".

◆ Special Guest

Japan's Efforts on Beijing + 25



Mr. YOSHIDA Masateru, Director for International Affairs, Gender Equality Bureau, Cabinet Office

Approximately 5,000 people from Japan were in attendance at the Beijing Conference, and the Chief Cabinet Secretary participated as the Minister of State for Gender Equality.

Around the world, the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action became the goals for gender equality, while in Japan, the Basic Act for Gender Equal Society was enacted in 1996 and the Gender

Equality Bureau, Cabinet Office was established in 2001.

Looking back on the past five years before Beijing+25, Japan has seen significant progress in women's participation and workstyle reform. However, challenges still remain in terms of women's leadership, women's advancement, violence and men's involvement in housework and childcare. Gender equality is positioned in the SDGs as an important cross-cutting theme, and we would like to navigate the waters ahead to achieve all goals.

Equality Bureau, Cabinet Office was established in 2001.

◆ Keynote Speech

The Long, Winding and Bumpy Road TO and FROM Beijing



Prof. Patricia LICUANAN, Philippines/former chair of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) & former Higher Education Minister

The most important achievement of the World Conference on Women in Beijing were opening up the following new frontiers.

1) Elevating the issue of violence against women from a private domestic concern to the level of public policy.

2) Evaluating women's unremunerated work and calling for the development of methodologies for measuring women's work and reflecting it in national accounts.

3) Reaffirming women's rights as basic human rights and including sexual rights as human rights.

4) Confirming the rights of girl-child, addressing discrimination, and demanding protection from all forms of abuse and exploitation.

5) Recognizing female migrant workers as a vulnerable group in addition to migrant women and guaranteeing their rights.

The World Conference on Women in Beijing was the largest UN meeting held at that time, with approximately 50,000 participants in attendance. In the negotiating process, there were several controversial issues such as human rights, resources, reproductive health and sexual orientation (finally dropped). In the end, a consensus was

reached on most of the issues raised at the meeting, culminating in the unanimous adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action.

Since the conclusion of the meeting, there have been improvements in the issues of gender equality in education, reduced maternal mortality rates, enactment of legislation to stop domestic violence, establishment of national machineries for the advancement of women, and a reduction in child and forced marriages. However, even with these advancements, women still make up the majority of the poor, the percentage of women in high profile jobs, as well as politics is low, and attacks on the defenders of women's human rights are on the rise. The media remains a man's world and women still bear the brunt of coping with climate change.

Before Beijing +25, the feminist movement is aging and there is need for young feminists to take over. There is lack of prioritization of women's issues. We are threatened by misogyny and sexism as resistance to feminist gains. However, information and communication technology that were not present in Beijing is a valuable tool for connecting feminist groups, leading to inter-movement solidarity and cooperation. Inter-generational feminism brings new voices, new thinking and new ways of doing.

◆ Local Reports by KFAW Foreign Correspondents

*Participation from local areas via web conferencing system



Mr. CHAYKU (Bhutan), Anchor and producer of Bhutan Broadcasting Service (BBS), 28th KFAW Foreign Correspondent

In Bhutan society, women's capabilities are constantly looked down on and women accept all decisions made by men. However, today, education is breaking down these barriers to inequality. A royal decree proclaiming equality between women and men was announced in 1998, and in 2008, the transition from a 100-

year monarchy to a parliamentary democracy gave the country its first female minister. Women's participation in local politics has increased as women have become educated and networks for women's empowerment have been created. Bhutan is a tiny, less-developed country with few resources, but it has achieved much in terms of gender equality.

Ms. Marisna YULIANTI (Indonesia), Expert on gender, 24th and 27th KFAW Foreign Correspondent

The most serious problem in Indonesia is gender-based violence. Even as the National Committee on Violence Against Women was established in 2018, that same year saw more than 400,000 reports of rape and sexual assault, with men accounting for 90% of the perpetrators. Indonesia has no specific laws related to sexual violence, and the criminal code contains no clear definition of rape or sexual assault. In 2015,

women activists, scholars and gender experts submitted a bill to the Diet to end sexual violence. Deliberations on the bill began in 2016, but there are no signs of it passing as it goes against Islamic teachings and the government is fearful of the potential for conflict. We activists will continue the fight.



◆ Sessions

◆ What It Means to Work

◆ Session 1

Moderator Prof. TAMURA Keiko, Faculty of Law, The University of Kitakyushu

Specialist HORIUCHI Mitsuko, President of KFAW

Presentation Speakers

Ms. TOKUNAGA Yasuko, Chair, BPW Kitakyushu

Ms. KOGA Yoshimi, Group Manager, Capacity Development Group, Plant Business Supervision Department, Plant Business Division, Plant Engineering Business Unit, Sankyu Inc.

Ms. HATTORI Yumiko, Representative, Chikyu Koyu Club (CSO)



When experts were asked about what work means to them, Ms. Tokunaga Yasuko, Chair of the Japan BPW Kitakyushu Club, spoke about her many years of experience aiming to improve the status of working women and the Equal Pay Day campaign. Ms. Koga Yoshimi from Sankyu Co., Ltd. talked about her efforts to promote women's active participation by working to change the attitudes of all employees in a mostly-male workplace, increasing the number of women on staff and expanding the occupational fields open to women. She noted that both women and men must change their awareness towards unpaid work and make use of childcare and nursing care

systems. Ms. Hattori Yumiko, a representative of Chikyu Koyu Club, presented on the club's volunteer activities connecting people through personal encounters and experiences. Lastly, projects at the Kitakyushu Municipal Gender Equality Center MOVE were introduced from the perspective of empowering women and girls.

Following that, discussions took place on a wide range of topics, including changes in female workers through the 30 years of activities of the Japan BPW Kitakyushu Club, the participation of young people in activities, and the substitution of AI and robots in the labor force.

◆ Living on the Earth

◆ Session 2

Moderator Mr. KONDO Michiaki, Special Project Professor, The University of Kitakyushu

Specialist Ms. ODA Yukiko, Vice-Convener, Japan Women's Watch (JAWW)

Presentation Speakers

Ms. NAGAO Yukiko, Vice-Chair, Yahatahigashi Ward, Health-mate Kitakyushu

Ms. GOTO Kanako, Representative, Blue Earth (CSO)

Ms. HISANAGA Emiko, Representative, Wakamatsu Cosmos Club (CSO)

Students from Kitakyushu Municipal Kirigaoka Junior High School's special needs class



Expert Ms. Oda Yukiko stated her ideas on being aware of the sense of crisis facing the earth and working as an actor for change, as well as the importance of women taking part in development and environmental decisions in the same way as men. Ms. Nagao Yukiko from Health-mate Kitakyushu, spoke about the group's activities through food and the issues of hunger and food loss. Ms. Goto Kanako of the Blue Earth raised the issue of gender in relation to public restrooms and spoke about how they want to create a society where everyone can live happy lives by thinking of ways to make restrooms available to all. Ms.

Hisanaga Emiko from the Wakamatsu Cosmos Club introduced activities that have evolved from the creation of cosmos flower beds to an environmental volunteer system under the theme of "starting from what you can do" with the hope of bringing happiness to children. Lastly, students from Kitakyushu Municipal Kirigaoka Junior High School's special needs class spoke about the various activities they are involved in under the theme of being eco-friendly to connect with people although there are many things they have difficulty with, and the importance of caring for others to create a livable society for all.

Think about Future (Youth session)

◆ Session 3

Moderator Ms. KATSUKI Masako, Management Committee and Management Planning Bureau, Nishinippon Shimbun Group

Specialist Prof. Patricia LICUANAN

Presentation Speakers

Mr. KUMEI Ryuzo, Representative, Kumei Juku and a senior in high school.
JIYUGAOKA High School students
University students, ESD promotion class, The University of Kitakyushu
Ms. MIYAZAKI Jun, Shimonoseki City University



Expert Ms. Patricia LICUANAN asked each of the presenters about specific actions that could be taken for gender equality and women's empowerment. Ms. Miyazaki Jun, a student at Shimonoseki City University, said that there are three important elements needed for people around the world to be able to live in peace—"understanding, thinking, and acting", and that a society must be created where there are boundless possibilities for women to take on anything. The students from Jiyugaoka High School talked about the need for opportunities to discuss how to eliminate stereotypes and prejudice and learn about gender from an early age through exchanges with government officials from around the world. Students from The University of Kitakyushu presented on activities, such as events that help people understand about the current situation around the globe, to create an ideal world. They also expressed their wish to take the initiative to turn indifference into interest and address the gender

gap by taking into account the perspectives of young people and students, who will be the leaders of the future. Mr. Kumei Ryuzo from Keio Shiki Senior High School talked about the activities at "Kumei Juku", a class that provides instruction to children about the importance of housework, which when done from an early age, improves non-cognitive skills (such as self-esteem, action, compassion and other important aspects of being a whole person) and helps address gender issues in the home. Mr. Kumei stated that being involved in housework can help create a society where gender equality is the norm and will brighten the future of Japan.

Prof. Patricia Licuanan concluded the session with the observation that it is important for generations to come together to solve problems and that women and men should not work in opposition to one another, but as friends who can improve the earth together.

FY2019/2020 KFAW Visiting Researchers and Research Themes

KFAW recruits visiting researchers annually from universities and research institutes to conduct studies and research on various topics related to gender and women. This year, selected researchers will conduct research in two teams over a two-year period on the following themes.

The Transformation of Family in Development : Basic study toward International Comparison

HACHISUKA Mayumi, Development Consultant
SANO Mayuko, Associate Professor, Fukuoka Prefectural University

Although families are expected to play a role in ensuring the well-being of individuals from both an economic and emotional perspective, recent changes in family structures have made this next to impossible. Families have also been critically regarded as limiting the freedom of individuals, especially women, even as they ensure their well-being. How can the well-being of individuals be ensured amidst the changes in family structures? How can inequality in families be eliminated to ensure women's freedom?

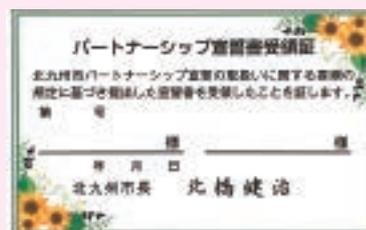
After defining the ideal state of personal well-being, this study will examine ways to make family support more effective in Japan and overseas by reviewing the state of family support around 1993, which can be seen as a time of a global shift in family policy, and in developmental policies in particular from a sociological and developmental perspective, and considering the corresponding relationship between actual changes in family relationship.

The Situation of "the Partnership System" (the partnership certification for the sexual minority) by the Local Governments in Japan and the Recommendation for the Future

HARADA Izumi, Professor, ONO Tomoya, Associate Professor, Department of Law, Economics and Sociology, Faculty of Law, Economics and Humanities, Kagoshima University

Partnership systems set in place by local governments are significant in that they seek to fulfill, even imperfectly, the demand for constitutional rights, such as safeguarding freedom of marriage and equal treatment for couples wishing to marry someone of the same sex.

The purpose of this study is to clarify the significance and limitations of partnership systems enacted by different local governments by investigating the content, format, effects, operational status and how these systems are being utilized in other administrative services.



Partnership Certification by the Mayor of Kitakyushu

Debrief on the 63rd Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW63)

Date & Time: Thursday, June 13, 2019 18:30-20:00

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

Speakers: HORIUCHI Mitsuko, President of KFAW

KINOSHITA Akiko, Governor, District 26, Zonta International **Number of participants:** 47

Report by HORIUCHI Mitsuko, President of KFAW

CSW63's priority theme was "Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls". Social protection is similar to "social security" systems in developed countries. However, in developing countries, this also includes the perspective of providing support to vulnerable segments of society that have fallen into poverty and do not have access to social protection due to under-developed systems. There were five agreed conclusions from CSW63: (1) Strengthen normative, legal and policy frameworks, (2) Strengthen women's and girls' access to social protection, (3) Strengthen access to public services for women and girls, (4) Make infrastructure work for women and girls, and (5) Mobilize resources, strengthen women's participation and improve evidence. Also proposed were

the (1) recognition of the value of unpaid work (unpaid domestic duties, etc.), reduction and redistribution, (2) removal of barriers for access to public services (such as the provision of safe and affordable drinking water, etc.), (3) promoting the participation of women in policy dialogues and decisions, and (4) the end of impunity for violence against women.

The main agenda for CSW64, which will be held in 2020 is Beijing+25, which marks 25 years since the organization of the Fourth World Conference on Women at which the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action were adopted. I hope you will all take a deep interest in this upcoming meeting.



Report by KINOSHITA Akiko, Governor, District 26, Zonta International

With about 1,200 members from around the world, Zonta International is a club that has more than 100 years of history behind it. With the goal of "completely changing the current reality that is impeding gender equality and human rights", Zonta International is continuing its work until all women have access to education, medical care, and legal and economic resources, and violence against women no longer exists around the world. The club's major goal for the next two years is to end child marriage.

One hundred and ten members from 17 countries in Zonta International took part in CSW63, and nine members

from district 26 (Japan) were present, including myself. With nearly 9,000 people in attendance, almost twice as many as last year, it was difficult even to enter the UN general assembly hall where the opening ceremony was held. Zonta International organized three parallel events at CSW63 on (1) creating a world where girls can receive education and health services (co-organized with UNICEF), (2) ending child marriage in the U.S. and India, and (3) developing systems to help adolescent girls say "no" to child marriage (co-organized with UNICEF and the United Nations Population Fund).

Zonta International is determined to continue developing various activities and passing them down for generations to come.

Report from the FY 2019 KFAW Asian Gender Researchers Network Seminar

Gains from the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing)

Date & Time: Thursday, September 19, 2019 13:30-15:00

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

Speaker: HORIUCHI Mitsuko, President of KFAW

The UN World Conference on Women was held for the first time in 1975 in Mexico, followed by subsequent meetings in 1980 (Copenhagen), 1985 (Nairobi), and 1995 (Beijing). 2020 is a memorable year, as it marks 25 years since the meeting was held in Beijing.

The World Conference on Women has three main goals: equality, development and peace. The Beijing Conference had four main significant outcomes. The first was that the word, "gender", was used for the very first time and topics were addressed as gender issues, that is to say, problems facing both women and men, rather than simply issues faced by women.

Second, with the spotlight once again turned squarely on women's rights, the United Nations took up the issues of reproductive health/rights and violence against women. These were significant issues as women are sometimes used as tools of war, such as the rape of women in the name of ethnic

cleansing during the Balkan conflict just prior to the Beijing Conference.

Third was the concept of gender mainstreaming. As gender issues can be found in every field, women's participation is essential in all areas. Goal 5 in the SDGs focuses on the achievement of gender equality, but other goals, such as those focusing on poverty, education, welfare, climate and the environment, cannot be realized without gender equality.

The fourth was the concept of empowerment. Empowerment is the idea of women becoming stronger themselves and the need for various policies to achieve that. The emergence of the idea of empowerment at the Beijing Conference is a major accomplishment.

This year (Beijing+25, or 25 years since the Beijing Conference), is shaping up to be a very exciting year for gender equality and actions to empower women and girls worldwide.



JICA Gender Mainstreaming Policies for Government Officers 2019 (1st program)



From this fiscal year, “Gender Mainstreaming Policies for Government Officers” is being conducted as a paired training with one representative each from national machineries promoting gender equality and other ministries and organizations in order to promote gender mainstreaming in each country in a more cross-sectoral way.

The first training program was held between June 12 (Wed) and July 10 (Wed) with nine participants from six countries (Afghanistan, Kosovo, Pakistan, Malawi, Bhutan and Cambodia).

Participants paid a courtesy visit to the Mayor of Kitakyushu City on July 4 (Thu) and listened to a lecture on the status of the city’s promotion of the SDGs. On July 5 (Fri), the participants took part in an interactive exchange with students at Jiyugaoka High School (second years,

about 50 students) who are studying about gender. The participants joined groups divided by country and after introducing the students to their countries, strengthened the exchange by answering various questions on gender from the students. A participant from Malawi commented on how “amazing it is that Japanese schools incorporate gender and the SDGs in the curriculums from kindergarten to high school” and that he wanted to do the same in his own country.

Participating in these types of interactive exchanges with local residents can increase understanding on gender issues by both JICA participants and those who take part in these activities. KFAW provides support to ensure that this one-month training period is a meaningful and significant opportunity for participants.



In 1991, the Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women (KFAW) established a foreign correspondent system to broadly network with people overseas, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region. Past and present foreign correspondents are 308 people in 42 countries in total. This year, 4 persons from 4 countries are selected and work as KFAW foreign correspondents. Through this network, KFAW will keep providing up-to-date information from various parts of the world. The profiles of the correspondents and other reports are available at the KFAW website (<http://www.kfaw.or.jp/correspondents/index.html.en>).

The 29th KFAW Foreign Correspondents



Bangladesh

Ms. Sakia HAQUE

Doctor, Representative of Travelettes of Bangladesh



Sri Lanka

Ms. Dishani SENARATNE

Project Director, Writer, Researcher



Pakistan

Ms. Shabana MAHFOOZ

Freelance Journalist



Nepal

Ms. Sushmita MANANDHAR

Freelance Consultant

A Roof Over Their Head: The Accommodation Needs of Women Workers in Free Trade Zones (FTZs) in Sri Lanka

Ms. Dishani SENARATNE (Sri Lanka)

Initially known as an Export Processing Zone (EPZ), Sri Lanka's first-ever Free Trade Zone (FTZ) was founded in Katunayake in 1978, following the introduction of an open economy policy that deviated from the country's agro-based economy. The then-J. R. Jayewardene administration offered numerous concessions and incentives for foreign investors which subsequently led to the establishment of FTZs in other areas like Biyagama, Koggala, Mirigama, Malwatte and Wathupitiwala. Since its inception, an overwhelming majority of the enterprises that operate in the FTZs are apparel exporters whilst there is evidence of a rising trend in diversification into other sectors such as glove and jewellery production.

The FTZ workforce is predominantly made up of women who have migrated to large cities for employment. Most possess minimum educational/professional qualifications and are interested in accomplishing short-term personal goals such as saving money for a dowry, building a house and rendering financial assistance to siblings and other family members. The end of the civil war between the government forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in 2009 resulted in the exponential growth of Northern and Eastern Tamil women joining the FTZ labour force. A great number of companies provide not only meals but also shuttle transportation facilities to employees at concessionary rates. Nevertheless, the cramped hostels which have mushroomed in the surrounding areas speak volumes about the deplorable living conditions of the FTZ workforce.

Access to decent and affordable accommodation is acknowledged a basic human right. The accommodation needs of female FTZ workers, however, are largely ignored both by companies and the Board of Investment (BOI), the apex government body that oversees the FTZs. Arguably, women are more vulnerable to sexual harassment and assault at privately-owned makeshift boarding houses which offer limited privacy. On the other hand, there have been cases of women falling sick owing to poor sanitation facilities in these so-called hostels which are run by a "boarding aunty" (a female overseer who is employed by a landlord). In order to



A boarding house located in Katunayake

reduce their monthly electricity bill, some opt to cook on kerosene stoves, posing a risk to health. Sadly, female workers continue to live in small spaces due to their inability to pay

Profile

I'm the Project Director of Writing Doves, a non-profit initiative which aims to publish a trilingual collection of children's stories to promote intercultural understanding. Previously, I taught English at a state university in Sri Lanka. I'm also a published poet and a short-story writer.



exorbitant monthly rents. In other words, their resilience at work is fanned by the commonly-held belief that they would return to their native places once their goals have been attained.



A janitor of a garment factory in her room

Ironically, the female FTZ labour force is often labelled as *juki keli* (a derogatory name for garment workers) in spite of their massive contribution to the economy. In 2003, six songs that celebrated female garment-factory workers were released for public consumption by the Joint Apparel Association Forum (JAAF) with a view to empower the unsung heroes of the FTZ workforce. The social stigma against the female workers partly stems from unsatisfactory working conditions at the garment factories. The vast majority of employers reportedly pressurize employees to achieve unrealistic "targets" (weekly production output), capitalizing on the relatively submissive women workers.

The Ministry of Women and Child Affairs has a bigger role to play in creating a better workplace experience for women at every level. Unarguably, providing affordable and quality accommodation options will be a step towards improving employee satisfaction. Overlooking the rights of low-qualified FTZ female workers exacerbates the glass ceiling issue which has yet to be addressed both locally and internationally.

One month into office, Sri Lanka's President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has repeatedly pledged to ensure economic growth and safeguard national security. Against this backdrop, the government is likely to focus on wider economic and social issues in lieu of giving prominence to issues relating to working women. Setting up garment factories in rural areas of the country alone cannot attract and retain women in the workforce. Unless policy makers identify the factors affecting female labour force participation, Sri Lanka's aim of becoming a hub of ethical fashion will possibly remain a pipedream.

In Pakistan, Women Turn the Wheels of Change

Ms. Shabana MAHFOOZ (Pakistan)

It is slowly, although still not frequently, becoming the norm to see a female motorbike rider on the streets of Lahore, the second largest metropolis in Pakistan. For anyone from a developed country, or even those in the neighbourhood, this may not be something unusual. But in a country bound by tradition, it is close to a major achievement.

For women in Pakistan, the odds are high. Abuse and violence against women are still major issues, as evidenced by all the discussions and events that are part of the worldwide 16 Days Activism Against Gender-based Violence held between November and December every year. Harassment on the street, in the workplace and in the digital sphere is still rampant. Many decisions regarding a woman's education, marriage and career are still traditionally made by other family members. And where the streets are already cluttered with commuters belonging to a burgeoning population, the scant resources for transport coupled with lack of safety becomes a major hurdle for women traveling alone on public transport.

On the streets of Karachi, Lahore, Quetta and Peshawar, some of the major urban centres in Pakistan, the modes for public transport provided by the government are shockingly low in number. Although Lahore over the years has grown into an intricate network of highways, flyovers and underpasses, public transport in the city includes only a few bus services and a very limited inter-city railway network. This huge gap is thus filled by the private sector in the form of rickshaws, cabs and the now popular, ride hailing services, with a sizeable percentage of the population owning personal private vehicles as well.

For working women or female students, traveling alone can be a nightmarish experience. Trying to make their way onto a crowded bus poses a significant chance of a male stranger deliberately bumping into or brushing up suggestively. Cat-calling is also not unusual. A walk along a secluded street is a high risk for women as they may be followed by mischievous strangers or worse, be sexually harassed. If nothing else, cab drivers have been known to try taking advantage of young female travellers by extracting a higher-than-normal fare.

In these circumstances, women in Pakistan are often dependent on family members, if they are unable to own or drive their own cars. A motorbike, however, is a relatively better option, owing to its low cost and less space. But this is where tradition again makes its presence known.

Pakistan is officially an Islamic republic where Muslims make up more than 95 percent of the population. Women in

Profile

I am a freelance journalist with experience in broadcast journalism. I obtained a bachelor's degree in business administration with a major in finance. I have some experience in the field of education as well and have conducted research in preschool education. Currently, I am engaged in trainings and workshops in journalism as well as in contribution of articles, columns and news features to local newspapers and magazines and also a foreign publication.



Pakistan have been driving cars since the country's declaration of independence nearly 80 years ago, unlike some other Muslim majority countries like Afghanistan and until recently, Saudi Arabia. But cars provide a safe 'cover' for women, where they are enclosed in a space, away from prying eyes or hands. A motorbike, on the other hand, has mostly been deemed inappropriate, shameful or even unsafe for women in terms of handling the vehicle. Where female students could easily learn to ride a motorbike and conveniently use it to commute to their colleges or universities, many still feel that they would be exposed on the streets, vulnerable to harassment or even accidents.

Dealing with such misconceptions and fears has been the aim of the Sufi Foundation, a private organisation which has started a 'Women on Wheels' movement. As 2019 drew to a close, the foundation launched a movement in the country's largest urban centre, Karachi, to provide better mobility to women through subsidised motorbikes, road safety education and training, and networking opportunities for women drivers.

The project has already trained 3,500 women in the province of Punjab to ride motorbikes and provided them at a discounted rate of 40 percent. It aims to train 10,000 more women. Needless to say, the project has received an overwhelming response from women.

Women in Pakistan account for 49 percent of its population, and yet most of them are dependent on men for their day-to-day activities. The ability and convenience and above all, freedom to travel alone, are not just better solutions for transport. It also opens doors to many other avenues previously closed. For where a lack of safe travel or transport had been the only hurdle, or rather an excuse to keep an exuberant female away from pursuing higher education or excelling in her career, its removal is starting to transform the few opportunities available for young women in Pakistan into an infinite number in the years to come. The wheels have turned.



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The Unsolved Story of a Little Girl

Ms. Sushmita MANANDHAR (Nepal)

On July 26, 2018, thirteen-year-old Nirmala Pant from Kanchanpur, far western Nepal, got on her bicycle to go to her friend's house in order to complete her homework. A grade nine student, Nirmala never came back home. Her parents, both of whom are daily wage earners, went to the police to request them to look for their daughter. However, police officials took the complaint lightly. Nirmala's body was discovered in a sugarcane field the next day, on July 27. She had been raped and brutally murdered. Protests began in Kanchanpur and spread across the country with the public demanding action against the police officers for their negligence and the arrest of the perpetrators. It was also discovered that police officers had engaged in unethical behaviour and were suspects in the brutal rape and murder. A recorded video of the crime scene which went viral on social media showed a police officer washing Pant's trousers and covering the body. The District Administration office had to impose an indefinite curfew to curb the growing agitation, leading to a death of a fourteen-year-old boy and injuries to an additional five adults when police opened fire. A nationwide protest demanding **#JusticeForNirmala** took central stage with protesters demanding that the government take action against the perpetrators. Locals alleged that the police were reluctant to investigate the case as officials found out that the evidence pointed at two important figures. A high-level committee was formed to probe the case, and the Central Investigation Bureau and National Human Rights Commission launched an investigation but came nowhere close to identifying and arresting the perpetrators. In addition, the Minister for Communication and Information personally summoned the editors of all five state-run media outlets and instructed them not to publish any critical news related to Pant's rape and murder.

Recently, the number of rape cases have increased significantly in Nepal, and especially in the Tarai region, because perpetrators have not only gotten off scot free but are often rewarded for their crimes. Most of these cases remain unaddressed as a result of social stigma attached to the victim or inaction on the part of state authorities. Victims are either forced to marry the rapist or arrive at a settlement, and in some cases, they are even forced to withdraw their cases by powerful locals in the area. Five rape cases are reported daily in Nepal (data from Nepal Police).

Nepal's constitution stipulates that perpetrators of sexual violence receive the maximum punishment. Yet, although there has been an increase in the number of cases of reported rape, the conviction rate is low. The Nepal Police recorded 1,138 cases of rape and filed as many charge-sheets against 1,440 suspects in relevant district courts in 2016

Profile

I have worked with women at the national level to the grass roots level. I have experience in designing, planning and executing various programs, and organized, facilitated and interpreted many workshops, trainings, Training of Trainers (ToT), seminars to the party women wings on empowerment of women. Since 2017, I have been doing freelancer consultancy for Danish Institute for Parties and Democracy (DIPD) and Management Services for Health (MSH).



and 2017. Out of this number, only 885 people were convicted, as was mentioned in the annual report of the Office of the Attorney General. Police said the low conviction rate had in turn led to a rise in the number of crimes.

A study conducted by the rights body showed that violence against women and children was among the key security problems in Nepal. Therefore, the National Human Rights Commission has been monitoring the role of the Nepal Police in minimizing violence against women (VAW) and upholding human rights. Yet, Nirmala Pant's case remains unsolved. There are many more Nirmalas in Nepal whose cases go unreported, leaving the world in the dark about their lives or deaths. Of late, people have started to demand capital punishment for rapists, although the government of Nepal abolished capital punishment in 1990. Nepal needs legal changes to close loopholes and provide a safety net for victims. If ever there is a debate on whether Nepal should revive capital punishment, Nepalese women will support it unanimously, but the verdict remains in the hands of feudalist characters who are in decision-making positions. The verdict will not be in favor of women.



photo: Bikash Rai

FY 2019 Jiyugaoka High School Career Development Program on Gender Studies

The second-year students at Jiyugaoka High School were divided into three teams—Environment, Food Loss, and Gender—during an integrated study period to learn about the SDGs. This fiscal year, the KFAW High School student Career Program supported studies by a Gender Team of 52 students (32 girls and 20 boys).

Interactive Exchange with Participants on the JICA Gender Mainstreaming Policies for Government Officers

Date & Time: Friday, July 5, 2019 13:50-15:40

Venue: Jiyugaoka High School

Participants: 52 second-year students at Jiyugaoka High School, Gender Team
9 participants on the JICA Gender Mainstreaming Policies for Government Officers from 6 countries: Afghanistan, Cambodia, Kosovo, Pakistan, Bhutan, Malawi

Contents After the JICA participants joined the groups that had been divided up by country and talked about their homelands, the students had the opportunity to directly ask the participants questions on gender that they had prepared in advance. The students learned that even if laws and regulations are in place, gender equality cannot be achieved if they are not observed. They also learned about situations where national cultures, customs and religions promote discrimination, that more women are active in the political arena in other countries than they originally thought, and that gender issues are similar in both Japan and other countries. Although the students had studied about gender issues online and in books before the session, they seemed to have gained a better understanding after actually meeting and talking with people from these countries.



SDGs: Media and Gender

Date & Time: Wednesday, July 24, 2019 14:00-17:00

Venue: Jiyugaoka High School

Speaker: Ms. KATSUKI Masako, Management Committee and Management Planning Bureau, Nishinippon Shimbun Group

Participants: 44 second-year students at Jiyugaoka High School, Gender Team

Contents Ms. Katsuki, an ex-reporter from The Nishinippon Shimbun, delivered a lecture and set up a group work exercise to encourage the students to think about gender issues using different media, such as newspapers, and SNS. Picking up illustrative articles and actual newspaper articles by The Nishinippon Shimbun, Ms. Katsuki talked about how there are still many more men in the media field than women and that stereotypes of the roles played by women and men still persist. Lastly, Ms. Katsuki commented that the students must have an interest in various issues, not just to find information but to be able to think for themselves in order to be aware of the issues of discrimination and prejudice that are hidden in everyday life.



"Let's Think Sugoroku" & "Cherish Yourself"

Date & Time: Sunday, August 18, 2019 14:00-16:30

Venue: Large Conference Room, Yahatanishi General Lifelong Learning Center

Participants: Mr. MANABE Kazuhiro (Professor, The University of Kitakyushu)
Ms. KUROSE Mariko (Clinical Psychologist)

Organizers: Yahatanishi General Lifelong Learning Center, KFAW
Planning & Management: Manabe Zemi, Department of Regional Development, The University of Kitakyushu

Participants: 37 high school students (open call)

Part 1: Let's Think Sugoroku

With students from the Department of Regional Development at The University of Kitakyushu planning and managing the program, a seminar was organized to think about the SDGs and gender issues with high school students through games. The squares of the board game Life Sugoroku that the university students thought up describe familiar events that may happen depending on if you are a woman or a man that you may experience at school events, going to school, finding employment, getting married and raising children, such as, for example, how it is natural for men to treat someone on the first date or that only women are instructed to go to work early to clean and serve tea. Each team included three high school students and university students joined in as facilitators to discuss gender issues and help the scenes move forward.

After the game finished, Professor Manabe said that in Japan, the progress of gender equality as set out in Goal 5 is quite far behind the rest of the world, especially in terms of politics and the economy. He commented



that the high school students have the ability to change this and therefore, must develop the capability to collect information around them, discover issues, and communicate (especially the ability to listen).

Part 2: Cherish Yourself



Ms. Kurose, a clinical psychologist who supervised the development of the booklet, "Cherish Yourself", by MOVE for young people on dating DV and sexual violence had the high school students think about how to avoid falling victim to sexual violence and how to prevent themselves from becoming a victim, as well as how they

want to live their own lives in the future. The high school students seemed to take in Ms. Kurose's words and life hints on "awareness" that were sprinkled throughout her kind-hearted story.

