

25th Kitakyushu Conference on Asian Women

Date & Time: December 6 (Sat.), 2014, 13:30 – 16:00

Venue: Kitakyushu Municipal Gender Equality Center, MOVE

At the conference, Ms. Keiko OSAKI from the UN spoke about an international initiative to identify women's entrepreneurship statistically, based on the discussion during the UN expert group meeting on gender statistics held right before the conference in Kitakyushu. Subsequently, Ms. Eriko YAMAGUCHI, the founder of Motherhouse Co., Ltd., shared her experiences as a female entrepreneur.

The subsequent panel discussion introduced the example of the Philippines, one of the most advanced countries in the world in terms of empowerment of women, as well as measures promoted in Indonesia and Kitakyushu City.

■ Keynote Lecture 1

Ms. Keiko OSAKI

(Assistant Director, Statistics Division, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs)



UN Gender Statistics Program

From December 3 to 5, a UN expert group meeting on gender statistics was held here at the Kitakyushu Municipal Gender Equality Center, MOVE. Today, I would like to share with you what was discussed at the meeting.

It has come to be known that statistics are indispensable in the process of decision making in any field. The use of statistics has become increasingly common to objectively examine a wide range of social and economic phenomena and formulate an appropriate evidence-based policies. Although there are a wide variety of statistics, the UN considers that gender statistics are the area where much improvements are needed to monitoring progress in gender equality and women's empowerment at the global level.

The UN has long been engaged in increasing people's awareness of the significance of gender issues around the world. In order to capture the social and economic situations of men and women and their changes over time in a holistic manner, the UN identified a set of 52 gender indicators and is encouraging each country to collect such data. Although you may feel that the indicators are too many, they are a minimum set to identify the current gender situation from various aspects. In doing so, it is extremely important to assess whether the collected data can be used for international comparison. Categorizing the gender indicators into three groups in terms of conceptual refinement and data availability, the UN provides technical support for national statistical offices in the fields where countries lack a capacity to produce reliable and internationally comparable data on a regular basis. Such fields include women's entrepreneurship and asset ownership, which were the themes of the meeting held the other day. In this regard, the UN Statistics Division and UN Women have launched a special three-year joint project, called "the Evidence and Data for Gender Equality (EDGE) Initiative", with the purpose of collecting and compiling gender statistics that can be used for international comparison, refining statistical concepts, developing a method to collect statistics, and preparing appropriate guidelines as necessary.

Significance of Measuring Women's Entrepreneurship Statistically

Statistical identification of gender gaps in entrepreneurship

can reveal differences between male and female entrepreneurs, for instance, in motivations for entrepreneurship, management styles and business performances, and success criteria. Hence, such statistics can serve as a base to create mechanisms to foster and support women's entrepreneurship.

There is much to be improved in internationally comparable statistics to reveal gender gaps in entrepreneurship. However, it is clear even from the existing data that there are clear gender differences in the experiences of entrepreneurship. It is therefore essential to support entrepreneurs and promote appropriate policies from a gender perspective.

■ Keynote Lecture 2

Ms. Eriko YAMAGUCHI

(CEO and Chief Designer, Motherhouse Co., Ltd.)



Establishment of Motherhouse – I Had No Intention to Start a Business –

Although I was asked to speak about entrepreneurship today, I had originally no intention to start a business or become an entrepreneur. Nevertheless, I founded a company at the age of 24 about nine years ago. Now that I have about 250 staff members and 20 shops, I feel that I have rushed through these nine years. During this period, various events occurred. Many times I have regretted that I have started the business, or I did not want to go to my own office. However, I'm still continuing the business because of my very strong motivation. A strong passion has enabled me to continue moving forward.

"Create a Worldwide Brand from Developing Countries"

The mission of Motherhouse is creating a worldwide brand from developing countries. My story regarding the establishment of the company began when I had the opportunity to work for the Inter-American Development Bank, Washington. While working part-time entering budget data at the bank, I wanted to know how financial aid was delivered to developing countries. Hoping to know more about the real situation, I decided to go to Bangladesh, a country that appeared in my Web search result after I had entered the keyword "the poorest country in Asia." Hearing that an education visa would allow me to stay in the country for two years, I entered a local graduate school. This was when I started to think about establishing Motherhouse. At first, feeling that there was nothing that one person could achieve alone, I considered returning to Japan. Then I happened to know jute (golden fiber) in Bangladesh. Jute was used as a

material for coffee bean bags, 75 cents each. Aiming to make products more quickly at a lower cost than plants in China, one bag manufacturing plant employed many teenage girls. Seeing them work, I strongly felt there must be something else that the girls could do to fully demonstrate their capabilities, and I thought that the bags would sell better if they were of higher quality. An idea occurred to me. It would be good to add some value to the products to make them so adorable and cool that people would want to buy, rather than the products to simply process raw materials, or rather than the ones like fair-trade-style that people would buy because they felt sorry for those making them. Discovering what I really would like to try, I felt that the door to the future had finally opened.

Future of Motherhouse

I am proud that I have developed my staff members into craftspeople for the last nine years. When joining my company, they were unskilled, and I needed to teach them the basics of everything. Many problems worried me, including a high production failure rate. Nevertheless, I never gave up, and continued working patiently with the Bengali staff. Now they do a good job so that our production failure rate has declined to 0.8%. Encouraged by their sentiment that “Motherhouse is like home,” I would like to establish workshops of Motherhouse around the world. This is my present dream.

► Panel Discussion

<Panelists>

- **Ms. Eriko YAMAGUCHI**
(CEO and Chief Designer, Motherhouse Co., Ltd.)
- **Ms. Lina V. CASTRO**
(Interim Deputy National Statistician, Philippine Statistics Authority)
- **Ms. Gloria ARLINI**
(Co-Founder and Director, Nusantara Development Initiatives, Singapore)
- **Mr. Hidetoshi YOSHIMURA**
(Professor, Institute for Urban and Regional Policy Studies, University of Kitakyushu)

<Coordinator>

- **Ms. Mitsuko HORIUCHI**
(KFAW President)

Entrepreneurship of Philippine Women

- Ms. Lina V. CASTRO

Using specific figures from the perspective of statistics, Ms. Lina V. CASTRO spoke about the current situation and challenges of women’s entrepreneurship in the Philippines, an advanced country in terms of gender equality, as well as about the establishment of an appropriate environment and the provision of support from the national and local governments to achieve women’s economic participation. She indicated that although a wide variety of support was provided to women and the rate of women’s entrepreneurship was higher than that of men, female entrepreneurs tended to run small-scale businesses and had difficulty in securing long-term business continuation and growth. She also indicated that this was mainly due to household chores and child-rearing.

However, she stated that women’s entrepreneurship was

important in that the growth and development through the launch of such small-scale businesses would activate the entire economy, promote gender equality, and spur social development, ultimately contributing to improving the quality of life and reducing poverty.

Women’s Entrepreneurship in Rural Villages in Indonesia

- Ms. Gloria ARLINI

Ms. Gloria ARLINI, an Indonesian co-founder of an NPO in Singapore, spoke about the training program that the NPO established for women in rural villages in Indonesia to start businesses using solar lamps. The purpose of the program is to develop their skills and potential, thereby promoting empowerment of women. After going through the training program, women supply solar lamps to people living without electricity, and endeavor to increase the living standard of such people. Currently, 21 women are active as entrepreneurs, supplying solar lamps to as many as 12,000 people so far. The NPO does not carry out the training program on a temporary basis, but conducts follow-up, with due consideration given to the situation of each individual. Thus, the NPO has a support system for women to start businesses and provides follow-up for them to continue their businesses. She stated that the program has helped women in Indonesia sparkle.

Current Situation of and Support for Entrepreneurs in Kitakyushu City and Japan

- Mr. Hidetoshi YOSHIMURA

In Japan, currently, the rate of non-regular employment is high. In particular, many women work as non-regular employees. Amidst this situation, a shift from a passive working style, namely being employed by companies or other organizations, to becoming entrepreneurs is now gaining attention as one of the work style options. Mr. Hidetoshi YOSHIMURA explained that a wide variety of support for producing and developing entrepreneurs is available presently in Kitakyushu City and Japan, in the forms of consultation and guidance, human resource development, and financing.

On the other hand, he indicated that when compared internationally, the young people of Japan have little interest in entrepreneurship. He stated that in order to foster young people’s enterprising spirit, it was necessary to provide entrepreneurship education at universities and other institutes.



At the panel discussion