

KITAKYUSHU FORUM ON ASIAN WOMEN  
THE INAUGURAL ISSUE APRIL 1991

# Asian Breeze



Kokura Castle during the cherry blossom season, Kitakyushu City

KITAKYUSHU FORUM ON ASIAN WOMEN

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**THE INAUGURAL ISSUE**

APRIL 1991. No. 1

# Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women

## INTRODUCTION

The government of the City of Kitakyushu, in cooperation with its one million citizens, has been an active participant in the movement to improve the status of women. The city has recognized that international solidarity is necessary for women to raise their position in society.

With this in mind, the Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women was established on October 20, 1990.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE FORUM

The condition of women in society is essentially a "problem of human dignity." In this sense, it is an issue shared by the entire world community. For social stability and development in the 21st century, the individuality of each person must be respected and they must be given the chance to demonstrate their unique abilities. Women's problems in society have become increasingly urgent and pressing world issues.

Internationally, there has been a great movement towards the improvement of the status of women. In Asia, the promotion of national development and women's participation in this development has become an important issue. We believe that by working together and striving for a better understanding of women's problems, we can make a contribution not only towards improvement of the status of women, but also towards promotion of development and peace in Asia.

Through such themes as "Learning About One Another," "Getting In Touch With Others" and "Helping One Another," the Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women hopes to raise the status of women. Through our efforts, we also hope, in some way, to contribute to the world's advancement and to a lasting peace.



▲ Bangladesh

## ACTIVITIES OF THE FORUM

The primary activities of the Forum are exchange, training, research and study.

### 1. International Exchange

By sending groups of citizens and students to other Asian countries and by accepting visiting groups in return, we actively participate in the promotion of international and cultural exchange programs.

### 2. Training and Seminars

We sponsor training programs, offer a wide variety of information and conduct seminars to cultivate a better understanding of Asia.

### 3. Research and Study

In association with related organizations, we research and study the existing circumstances and the history of women's problems, as well as the roles of women in the development of the countries in which they live.

### 4. Accumulation and Distribution of Information

We accumulate and distribute information from books, newsletters, video tapes and other resource materials.

We also answer public inquires concerning Asian women and Asia.

### 5. Networking with Domestic and Overseas Groups

A broad network will be established to exchange information, collaborate on research, etc.

### 6. Cooperation of Volunteers

By working together with volunteers, we will increase the promotion and support for the causes of Asian women.

### 7. Forming a Network of Civic Groups

These groups will be primarily voluntary groups such as host-family organizations, etc.

## ON THE FORMATION OF THE KITAKYUSHU FORUM ON ASIAN WOMEN



### Hand-in-Hand with Asian People

President, Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women

**Hisako Takahashi**

The Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women was established on October 20, 1990.

Since then, a great many people have participated in the inaugural celebration, as well as our Asian Festival, various seminars on the status of women in Asian countries and other events. Our staff was deeply impressed with the sincere interest shown in women's issues.

This Forum aims to contribute to world-wide development and peace by working together with Asian peoples concerning the improvement of women's status in Asia. With these objectives in mind, we would like to inform as many people as possible about our activities and encourage them to think constructively about the problems facing women in Asia. We are therefore planning to publish and distribute a newsletter titled: "Asian Breeze."

Through your cooperation and support, we hope that "Asian Breeze" will become a strong wind, and that the Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women will be able to make great strides towards the achievement of our goals.



### Towards Improvement of the Status of Asian Women

Mayor, City of Kitakyushu

**Koichi Sueyoshi**

The Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women was established through a grant given to the City of Kitakyushu by the Ministry of Home Affairs under the "Hometown Revitalization Plan." This plan was started in 1988 to revitalize local cities through some regional development project.

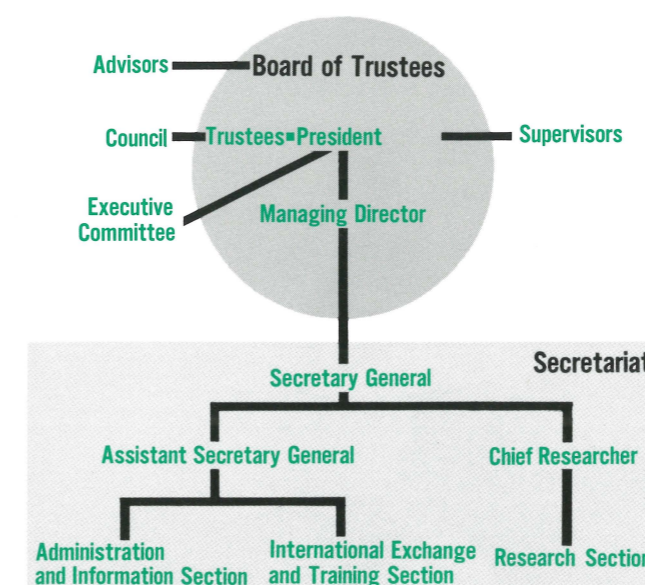
The Forum will research and study the issues and problems of Asian women, as well as promote exchanges among Asians.

The establishment of this Forum in Kitakyushu is very important for the realization of a society in which men and women can equally participate. It is time to work towards a society where men and women as equal human beings can fully develop their potential.

In order to raise the status of women in Asian countries such activities as, "Learning About One Another," "Getting In Touch With Others" and "Helping One Another," will help to create new relationships among Asian countries.

It is my hope that through the ever growing understanding and support from our citizens, the Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women will be able to achieve its objectives for the improvement of the status of Asian women.

## Organization



▲ Thailand

### MY DESIRES FOR THE KITAKYUSHU FORUM ON ASIAN WOMEN

President, Research and Training Institute of the Ministry of Justice

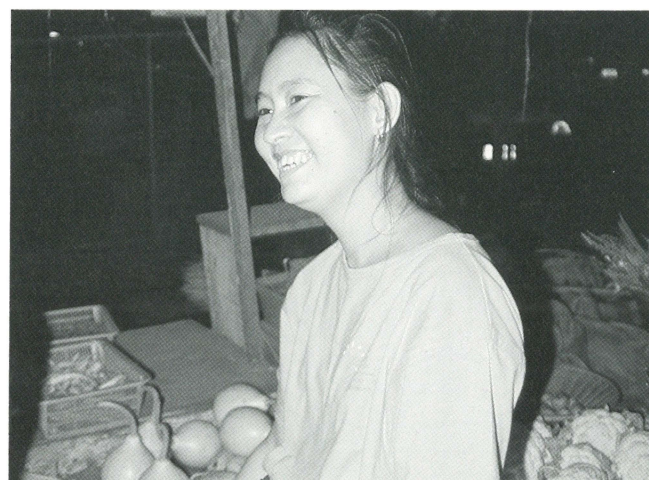
#### Minoru Shikita

I, as a graduate of Tochiku High School, am proud of the City of Kitakyushu for establishing the Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women, by wisely utilizing the grant under the "Hometown Revitalization Plan." I would like to show my great respect for the decision and efforts made by Mayor Sueyoshi and all of the other people concerned.

Wishing very greatly the vigorous growth of the Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women, I express some of my hopes frankly; First, I believe the Forum should focus on practical activities, based on the full support of both men and women, to raise the status of women in society and enhance their substantial contribution to the communities, rather than merely pressing forward theoretical discussions about constitutional and legal issues on equality of the both sexes.

Second, I hope the Forum should always make effort not to fail to provide significant benefits to the citizens of Kitakyushu as well as the peoples of Asia in whole. Third, I hope that the Forum would try to become self-supporting so as to continue successfully for a great many years, independent of various changes.

In order to realize the development of the ideal feminine image in Asian society which is moving towards industrialization, we must put in effect realistic measures and research. In the process, we can use the experience of Kitakyushu which is advancing into a post industrialization stage. If we are successful in this approach, my native town can be proud of its significant contribution to the world community.



Chairperson, Kitakyushu Women's Conference

#### Hirono Ishida

As a long-time member of the movement to improve the status of women, I am very pleased that the Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women has been established.

Our organization as well as several women's organizations in the city have been active in efforts to improve the position of women in the community. As we recognized, especially through participation in the Nairobi World Conference NGO(Non-Governmental Organization) Forum, that regardless of differences among countries women's problems exist everywhere, we put into action international exchange and cooperation in a way closely related to us.

The Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women was born because of the great efforts made by the women in our city to educate themselves, increase the scope of their thinking and enhance their proficiency in their daily lives and in the community. Through these activities, we women would like to advance international exchange and cooperation as well as develop along with other Asian people.



President  
Korean Women's  
Development Institute

#### Kim Yun-Duk

### THE STATUS OF KOREAN WOMEN AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF KOREAN WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

As Korean society becomes more urbanized and the nuclear family system becomes more popularized, consumption standard is elevated and extra income is required. The birth rate is lowered; therefore, the burden of married women over thirty years on their children is lightened and the burden of household work is reduced due to the expansion of electric home appliances.

Owing to the changes of industrial structure and social recognition, which thrusts the economic participation of women, the employment rate of women reached to 46.5% in 1989.

But the employment of women is characterized by young age, low-wage, low-level of skill, simple and repetitive work, low position and unmarried. Women are discriminated in every employment sector, from employment opportunity to wage, promotion, placement, educational training, retirement, resignation, and lay-off.

Accordingly, the advancement of female college graduates to clerical, professional, and management positions is relatively very difficult in reality.

In spite of the high educational zeal in Korea, of those students who succeeded in entering college and university in 1990, women accounted for only 32.1% of the total.

The problem that has to be pointed out is that majors preferred by female students are concentrated on arts, teaching, language and literature. To correct this situation, the career development education for middle and high school girls has to be revised, especially for raising interests of female students in the field of science and technology and developing their aptitude.

The participation of women in political and administrative fields is still low. Since the establishment of Korean government in 1945, there has been only eight women ministers and women civil officials of rank 5 and above were only 1.3% in 1990. In the current National Assembly, only 6 of a total of 299 are women; that is 2%. Since the first Korean woman succeeded in the examinations for higher officials in the judiciary department in 1951, there have been only 74 women judges and lawyers. The average length of life in

Korea was 74.9 in 1989 and the ratio of women sixty years or above was approximately 61% of the population and the marginal birth rate was 1.6 per woman.

Women-related statistics as above show that there are still many problems that have to be resolved despite continuous development of women in Korea.

Korean Women's Development Institute, since its establishment in 1983, has carried out various research and work projects for the development of the status of women and the promotion of their welfare.

It compiled basic materials for policies on women, published its research reports, and participated in the planning process of the 6th Five Year National Socio-Economic Development Plan: Women's Development Sector. The Institute published the "Long-Term Perspective on National Development Toward the Year 2000: the Women's Development Perspective." It also performed a part of the establishment, revision and enactment of the laws including the Equal Employment Opportunity Act, Mother and Child Welfare Act, and the Prostitute Prevention Act.

As an effort to revise the sexually discriminative contents and expressions in curricula, KWDI performed a research on textbooks of middle and high schools and the Ministry of Education commissioned the 5th School Curriculum Study Council to review sexual prejudices that are reflected in curricula. Accordingly, contents of textbooks being used in schools from 1989 began to be revised by principles of the equality between sexes, and also technical craft for male students and home economics for female students were merged into one subject.

To increase female employment, KWDI established Employment Information Guidance and Counselling Centers to support women who want to be employed. It also set up Women Volunteer Bank to organize the resources of women and to demonstrate women's ability.

Through the development of new types of occupation such as family day-care mother and small-scale business management, KWDI diversified women's profession. KWDI provided pilot programs for these new types of occupation to women's organizations. They in turn disseminated them throughout the country.

The Guidelines for Elimination of Discrimination against Women prepared by KWDI was adopted by the National Committee on Women's Policies in 1985. It became the basic reference material for employment of women. The White Paper on Women, the Social Statistics and Indicators on Women were also prepared by KWDI and are being used as basic materials for women's policies and women's studies. Recently, KWDI provided leadership training programs to cultivate female political leaders in anticipation of the local self government system and established networks with women's organizations throughout the country to grasp the status of Korean women and to foster women's activities.

## THE HISTORY OF KITAKYUSHU FORUM ON ASIAN WOMEN

### THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MASTER PLAN COMMITTEE AND MASTER DESIGN

November 1, 1989



The Master Plan Committee, with Hisako Takahashi as Chairperson, was organized to gather suggestions for the policies and activities of the Forum. The committee had many meaningful discussions and deliberations which resulted in the presentation to the Mayor on March 30, 1990 of the "Master Plan Committee Report." Based on this report, the "Master Plan for the Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women" was decided.

### EVENTS IN THE SEVEN WARDS OF KITAKYUSHU

February and March, 1990



Each of Kitakyushu's 7 wards formed its own executive committee made up of members from various women's organizations. These committees then sponsored several events under the theme "Encounter with Asia." There were a wide range of programs: lectures and symposiums with panelists from various fields; exchange meetings with foreign students and Asian residents in the city; introduction of Asian countries through slide and video tape presentations; a "food fair" where our Asian friends cooked special dishes from their own countries; and many other interesting programs. Through these programs we have been able to deepen interest in Asian countries and; particularly, in the problems of Asian women.

### '90 ASIAN INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM

March 31, 1990

As the culmination to the events held in the wards, an international symposium was conducted. Panelists from Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia and Japan delivered thorough reports on the existing conditions of women in their own countries and, afterwards, an excellent in-depth discussion was held.



### ASIAN SEMINAR

June to September, 1990

Although we live in Asia, we know very little about other Asian countries. Therefore, a series of ten public seminars were held to study the history, culture and women's problems in each country. The theme of the seminars was "An Introduction to the Circumstances in Asia." The number of applicants exceeded our expectation, showing that the interest level was quite high. We will continue our study of Asia under variety of themes.

### ESTABLISHMENT OF KITAKYUSHU FORUM ON ASIAN WOMEN

October 20, 1990

Based on the Master Plan adopted in July, the Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women, with Hisako Takahashi as President, was established on October 20, 1990.

By establishing this Forum, we believe we will be able to make even greater strides forward towards raising the status of Asian women and contributing to development and lasting peace in Asian countries.

In honor of the founding of the Forum, Sumiko Ito, a Tokyo High Court judge, gave a lecture on "The Role of Women in International Society."

### ASIAN FESTIVAL

November 30 - December 2, 1990

An Asian Festival to recognize the establishment of the Forum was held under the theme, "Cultures and Women in Asia."

There were a variety of events including: a display of Asian textbooks written in various languages, an exhibition of

Chinese clay warriors and horses from the Shin Dynasty, lectures on Asian topics and movies from Asian countries. A women's conference was conducted covering such subjects as marriage, the family and work in the 21st century etc.

A Malaysian dance drama, which produced fascinating shadows with dancers and lights, was performed, and an exchange party was held for conversation and dancing. During these three days, we felt we actually got to know other Asian countries better with our minds and our hearts.



### SEMINAR ON WOMEN'S ISSUES IN ASIAN COUNTRIES

December 8, 1990

The Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs held a "Seminar on Women's issues in National Machineries." 14 government officials in charge of women's issues from 12 Asian countries attended the seminar. The same group then came on December 8, 1990 to participate in the Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women's seminar entitled, "The present and the Future Situation of Asian Women." They reported how they were dealing with various problems and we exchanged our thoughts and ideas.

### LAUNCHING OUR BASIC SURVEY

We are organizing our research to gather information on groups and individuals that are working on solutions to the various women's problems in Asian countries.

Women's problems vary widely. We are conducting surveys on what kind of problems are occurring in each Asian country and what types of activities and research are being conducted by groups and individuals in these countries to reach solutions to the problems involved. Once we understand more about other Asian countries situation, the Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women can decide which problems to tackle, what individuals and groups we should work together with, what research and what exchanges to conduct.

This year surveys are being conducted in six countries -China, Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand. We hope to expand the area of survey as soon as possible.

## THE FORUM WINDOW

### The "Asian Breeze" starts blowing

The wind has many different faces. There are gentle zephyrs which barely move the petals of flowers as children move around. There is the cyclone, or even the typhoon that can cause great damage as a mass of hot air moves north from tropical oceans.

"Asian Breeze" hopes to be the kind of wind that it is generated from human interaction and that will be refreshing and full of warmth. Kenji Miyazawa, a well-known Japanese poet, once wrote that children are a crystal wind that blows towards the future. We believe that women can be the same as well. The Asian breeze generated by our women will also blow toward the future.

During the process of establishing the Forum, I had an opportunity to listen to a fascinating speech given by the late Ms. Nobuko Takahashi. As an advisor, she helped us establish the Forum. She talked about data which compared the social status of women in 99 countries in the world. The data was distributed by "The Population Crisis Committee," a private research organization in the U.S. and used such factors as education, labor, health and sanitation, participation by women in society, family life, etc. The country which placed highest on the list was Sweden. It was followed by Finland, the U.S. and East Germany. It is important to note that East Germany which was 4th was reunited with West Germany which was rated 16th. Since the start of the United Nation's Decade for Women, the women's liberation movement has moved forward with "Equality, Development and Peace" as its central themes. Perhaps "Democracy" or even "Self-determination" should have been added to this list. Japan was in 34th place. In Asia, Japan ranked second following Hong Kong. This is an extremely low position compared to Japan's GNP ranking. Another Asian country, Bangladesh, was in last place. Because of this fact, I realized I had to visit this country.

During our daily lives we often unconsciously push those discriminated against into invisible places. I believe that one effective way to see discrimination and human rights as our own problem is to put ourselves in their shoes. So I quickly used all the money I had and bought two airline tickets for Dhaka. I travelled with my daughter who was a high school sophomore and was wondering what to do with her future. We became an Asian breeze ourselves, "meeting" and "getting in touch with others." We stayed at an inn in Dhaka and at the university seminar house at Rajshahi. We made friends with many people who were full of curiosity and somewhat shy but very friendly. One of them was Ms. Mahmuda Islam, whom we invited to Kitakyushu Conference on Asian Women.

I hope to receive the support and participation of many people so that "Asian Breeze" can grow positively, widely and effectively.

Chief Researcher  
Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women  
**Masami Shinozaki**

# INFORMATION

## ● OASC INAUGURATED

In October of 1990, a voluntary group was organized after completion of the first Asian Seminar. The name of this group is "Our Asian Seminar Circle (OASC)." It consists of many of the participants from the first seminar who wanted to learn more about Asia.

OASC members, while exchanging information among themselves as well as with other groups, will aim to deepen international understanding and exchanges principally about Asia through study and practice.

To date OASC has sponsored by university professors and seminars concerning international relations. Also in January, under the theme, "Food Culture in Asia," the group listened to lectures by foreign residents, and later learned to cook Thai-style chicken curry and Korean-style Kimchi pancakes. OASC is also planning a study tour to Malaysia in October of 1991.

Ms. Tanaka, a representative of OASC, says impressively: "You start understanding what a country is like only after talking with the people from that country. If you don't talk to them, you won't realize what you don't know."

If you are interested, why not have a look at the activities of OASC? You will certainly find something new there.

For more information, please call:

Ms. Tanaka at 093-471-7065

## ● THE FORUM'S NEW SYMBOL



Our new symbol represents a combination of "A" and "a." The "A" is for Asia and the "a" is for advancement. Their combination symbolizes cooperative growth in the advancement of Asian women. Its image is infinite potential. Orange refers to the sun, women and Asia. Green refers to nature, intelligence and delightfulness.

## ● FORUM FOREIGN COLUMNISTS WANTED!

The Forum is seeking information from overseas for publication in its newsletter, "Asian Breeze." Can you introduce possible foreign columnists i.e. teachers, housewives, students who are interested in women's issues and live in Asia.

The primary assignment will be writing up to date quarterly reports about women's lifestyles and issues in your area for the Forum.

The duration of this job is one year.

The deadline for application is May, 20th.

For more information, please contact:

Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women

3-9-30 Asano, Kokura-Kita, Kitakyushu 802, JAPAN

Tel. 093-551-1220 Fax. 093-551-7535

## EDITOR'S POSTSCRIPT

While enjoying the Malaysian dance performance at the December Asian Festival – the strength of the dancer's steps on the ground and the fineness of their hand movements–, I felt the energy of people.

The "Asian Breeze" is also people's energy put into making a sensitive publication.



## Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women

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