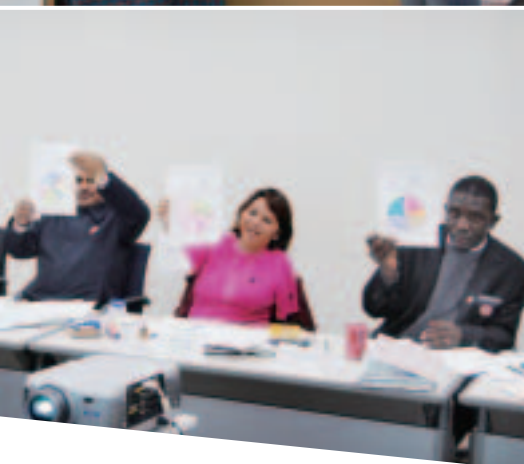


Asian Breeze

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KITAKYUSHU FORUM ON AISIAN WOMEN (KFAW) July 2010 Triannual Publication



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Women Today

ROK Challenges Low Birth Rate Aging Society

The growth potential decline, the widening income gap, increasing debt of countries and households caused by low birth rates and aging societies are common challenges to Japan and Korea's economies. Japan has started seeing a decline in its working-age population since 1995. Last year, Japanese population of more than 65 years old accounted for 25% of its entire population. In 2008, the national fertility rate of Japan stood at 1.32 and its total population has been falling since 2005. Korea is following suit. Korea's working-age population is expected to start plummeting in 2016 towards a two-thirds decline by in 2050. Its elderly population is expected to take up 25% of the entire population. Last year, Korea's national fertility rate was 1.15 and its total population is expected to decline starting 2018.

Recently, Korea, through the Presidential Council of Future and Vision, has changed its policies to respond to the low birth rate problem. First, the policy of promoting childbirth has shifted its major direction from focusing on low income people-centered support and quantitative extension of care facilities to developing a set of policies which consider a variety of needs of the middle class and double income families. Second, attention on various types of family such as single parents and multi-cultural families attributed to social changes has been bolstered. Third, countermeasures on a national level have been developed for abortion. Fourth, the policy for keeping in Korea talented people and for attracting the best and brightest from overseas has been newly introduced. Best of all, the policies shaped by the Korean government, 'Project for increasing Koreans', namely policies to advance immigration; relieve the single citizenship system and eradicate illegal abortion have gained a great deal of attention.

There is enormous positive public response to the introduction of new measures to extend conditions for dual citizenship and to relieve various regulations on dual nationality. There is a sense that the policy is aimed at actively bringing competent human resources from overseas through the open system toward immigration. On the other hand, heated discussions about the plan for preventing illegal abortion have been raised between those who prefer to respect life and those who support the reproductive rights of women. On top of it, there has been a sharper division of opinions between netizens who approve and disapprove abortion since Korean Pro-life Doctors Association criticized abortion and reported clinics providing abortion surgery to the prosecution.

Demographers warn that more than three years of ultra-low fertility would pose a catastrophic crisis to the



Kyungsook Kim

Former President, Chungcheongnam-do
Womens' Policy Development Institute

Kyungsook Kim

country socially and nationally. Korea is already at a serious stage of ultra-low fertility for the past 9 years. Therefore, the Korean president and government often face criticisms, even though they are forming a set of policies to respond to low fertility. However, there is a short cut to tackle low fertility. It is to realize a gender-equal society. It is estimated that the national fertility rates of OECD member countries will increase, if HDI (Human Development Index) exceeds a certain level. If GEM (Gender Empowerment Measure) is higher than a certain level, the national fertility rate will grow. As a country's gap between HDI and GEM is wider, its fertility rate is lower. A country with high social economic development and low gender equality shows an unusually low national fertility rate. The fact that Korea and Japan show the world's lowest birthrates confirms this rationale.

While adopting measures for increasing Koreans, the government tried to accelerate students' entry into the workforce as another way to address the aging society. Namely, the Korean government attempted to reorganize the school system so that the school age to enter elementary school would be one year earlier. However, the opposition by care facilities and infant care facilities blocked the plan.

In the low birthrate and aging society, economic activities and consumer markets are shrinking and the employment environment is worsening resulting in a lower birth rate. The vicious cycle is a national challenge both Korea and Japan should confront. Chungcheongnam-Do Women's Policy Development Institute (CWPDI) and Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women (KFAW), which signed a MOU, will make all out efforts to raise the awareness of their respective governments as well as the public about a gender equal society promoting a high birth rate in both Korea and Japan.

Profile of Dr. Kyungsook Kim

Dr. Kyungsook Kim is former president of Chungcheongnam-do Womens' Policy Development Institute, Republic of Korea and a professor of Political Science at Kongju National University. Kim is one of Korea's distinguished political scientists. She is vice president of both the Korean Political Science Association and the Korean Association of International Studies. Currently, she serves as a Practical Affairs Committee member of the Presidential Commission for Decentralization. And Kim works as an Advisory Committee Member of the National Assembly; Ministry of Unification; Ministry of Public Administration and Safety; Ministry of Education, Science & Technology; Ministry of Gender Equality and the Unification Advisory Council.

Japan's New Lay Judge System and Gender Part 2

From Jurors' Viewpoints



Mikiko OTANI

Deputy Director of the Secretariat for the Gender Equality Promotion Division, Japan Federation of Bar Associations

Citizen's participation in criminal court

Many nations in the world have systems that allow lay citizens to participate in criminal trials as jurors. Among those systems, the most well known is the jury system, under which jurors selected from among ordinary citizens judge whether or not an accused person is guilty. If he or she is found guilty, penalty is set basically by professional judges. Some countries have a joint judge-jury system, under which a jury comprising ordinary citizens works jointly with professional judges. In this system, in addition to the judgment of guilty or not guilty, the jury determines the penalty to be applied, together with the professional judges. Although Japan's new jury system (called *saiban-in* or "lay judge" system) is similar to the joint judge-jury system, the Japanese system differs from its overseas counterparts in that the Japanese jurors serve only on a single case, rather than for a fixed term, as in the joint judge-jury system. Because of this, Japan's present system can provide more people with opportunities to participate in trials. This is more effective in fulfilling the goal of the new system: to foster the public's understanding of, and trust in, the judiciary system. In comparison with the typical overseas jury system on the other hand, the Japanese jury system imposes a greater burden on individual jurors. It is indeed a great burden for lay citizens to judge whether or not an accused person is guilty; but in addition to this, Japanese *saiban-in* (jurors) must decide the penalty to be applied. Even though they can consult professional judges, many jurors are likely to feel it difficult to impose a proper penalty. Moreover, many are concerned about the considerable influence of their own decision-making on the subsequent lives of defendants.

First year of the lay judge system

Japan's jury system was inaugurated on May 21, 2009, when the Act concerning Participation of Lay Judges in Criminal Trials became effective. Up until the end of December in the same year, *saiban-in* trials had been held on 142 cases. Recently, a report on these *saiban-in* trials has been compiled, based on statistical data and a questionnaire survey concerning *saiban-in*'s first-hand impressions. According to that report, 838 citizens were selected as *saiban-in* during 2009. Of those, 53.5% were men and 43.0% were women (no response: 3.5%). The percentage of women was 10.5% less than that of men. According to the questionnaire survey, 55.7% of the respondents said that before serving as *saiban-in* they had been either very reluctant or slightly reluctant to

participate in trials. However, after serving as *saiban-in*, 96.7% of the respondents felt that they had good or very good experiences. By gender, 36.6% of the male respondents said that before they were selected as *saiban-in* they had been eager to participate in trials. By contrast, only 22.1% of the women answered that they wanted to serve as *saiban-in*. Whereas 50% of the men replied that they were either very reluctant or slightly reluctant to become *saiban-in*, 63.1% of the women replied in the same way, indicating that the men were more eager to serve as *saiban-in* than the women were. After actually serving as *saiban-in*, however, both men and women replied that they had good or very good experiences. In this regard the gap between men and women was nominal, since this response was given by 97.1% of the men and 96.1% of the women.

Saiban-in and gender perspective

Concerning trial length, in 134 of the 142 cases the trials finished within four days. Prospective *saiban-in* can be exempted from this duty for various reasons. Of the 9,777 individuals who were exempted from their obligation in 2009, 1,084 were exempted because they were busy taking care of the aged, sick and/or children; 166 were either pregnant or had given childbirth within the eight weeks previous to the trial concerned. On the other hand, nearly 20% of the selected *saiban-in* were taking care of the aged, sick and/or children. Based on these data, we can infer that women's low percentage among *saiban-in* (more than 10% lower than men) is partially attributable to the greater responsibility that women bear in caring for the aged, sick and/or children. To ensure that women can participate in trials equally with men, appropriate measures should be taken, from gender-sensitive perspectives. With this in mind, I expect that more questionnaire surveys will be conducted, and that they will include appropriate questions from gender-sensitive perspectives. I also hope that the results of such studies will be reflected in measures to improve the present *saiban-in* system.

Yet another important issue concerns mental support for *saiban-in*. Tasks of *saiban-in* can inflict psychological stress on both men and women. In this relation, we must review whether or not sufficient support is being provided to *saiban-in*. Although the Supreme Court has established a counseling desk and offers professional counseling service, we must carefully determine whether the service, including information on the service, is truly accessible.

Attended the 54th CSW in New York

Joint Seminar in New York with the Chungcheongnam-do Women's Policy Development Institute (CWPDl)

“Empowerment of Women : Best Practices and New Challenges in Japan and the Republic of Korea” (Mar. 1, 2010)

The UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) convened for the 54th time at the UN Headquarters in New York, March 1-12, 2010.

The Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women (KFAW) takes part in the CSW every year as a qualified NGO of the UN.

In addition to participating in this year's CSW, KFAW jointly staged an international seminar with the Chungcheongnam-do Woman's Policy Development Institute (CWPDl) of Korea which KFAW signed an academic exchange agreement last November. It was a part of the Global NGO Forum for Women that coincided with the regular session of the UNCSW.

The joint seminar was entitled “Empowerment of Women: Best Practices and New Challenges in Japan and the Republic of Korea.” In the seminar's first half, organizations from both Japan and Korea reported on the progress made with past efforts to empower women and mainstream gender. In the second half, the spotlight was focused on measures to address a declining birthrate, which is an important issue in both Japan and Korea. Reports were given on this situation and policies of both countries as well as the building of environments that facilitate work-life-balance for women. Opinions were shared with NGO representatives from around the world.



▲From right: Research Fellow Dr. Heon Joo SUH, and President Dr. Kyung Sook KIM, CWPDl

The day of the joint seminar, March 1, coincided with the start of the regular session of the UNCSW. About 90 persons from NGOs and NPOs from around the world were

in attendance, which resulted in some having to stand. There were many questions from the floor, which asked for example, about KFAW and CWPDl, measures to address the declining birthrate in Korea; percentages of women in the workforce and the work-life-balance practices.



▲Participants presented a diversity of questions and comments on the gender activities and respective organizations of KFAW and CWPDl; measures against dwindling birthrates, gender balance in the workplace and work styles.

This was the first time for KFAW to stage a joint seminar outside of Japan with an organization with whom they have an academic exchange agreement. During the UNCSW session and the seminar, as there were many representatives from governments, NGOs and other organizations from around the world, KFAW expanded its network by providing information on Kitakyushu and Chungcheongnam-do.

◆Date & Time March 1 (Mon.), 2010; 14:00 ~ 15:30

◆Place 10F. Conference room, Church Center for the United Nations
777 UN Plaza (Corner of 44th St. and 1st Ave.), New York, USA

◆Attendance 90

◆Program

Event	Description
Report on good practices which contribute to the empowerment of women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○Report “Innovative Projects of KFAW” Ms. Yoshizaki, President, KFAW ○Report “CWPDl and Gender Mainstreaming in South Korea” Dr. Kyung Sook KIM, President, CWPDl
Reports on New Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○Report “Policy Response to Low Birth and Aging Society in South Korea” Dr. Heon Joo SUH, Research Fellow, CWPDl ○Report “Policy Response to Low Birth in Japan” Dr. Masako Ota, Senior Researcher, KFAW
Discussion	Q+A



▲Joint Seminar Program handed out in New York

Expanding Network of World NGOs

Participation in the Global NGO Forum for Women: Beijing +15 (Feb. 27-28, 2010)

The Global NGO Forum for Women was hosted at the Salvation Army Greater New York Headquarters by the NGO Committee on the Status of Women, New York over a 2-day period immediately prior to the 54th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW).

KFAW took part in the forum alongside some 700 persons from NGOs world wide. The forum looked back on the progress made on the status of women over the 15 years since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action at the World Conference on Women. The forum then sent a message from NGOs to the UN CSW.



▲Scene at the Global NGO Forum for Women

The panel discussion on the first day addressed the roles played in improving women's rights by the UN World Conference on Women and featured Ms. Gertrude Mongella (currently President of the Pan-African Parliament), who served as the Secretary General for the 4th World Conference for Women in Beijing in 1995, and Ms. Patricia Licuanan (currently President of Miriam College), who chaired the main committee of that same conference. It then reported and shared opinions on patriarchy; violence against women and girls; women's health and climate change.

In the latter part of the first day, the participants from NGOs around the world presented in turn messages for the CSW. About 44 persons voiced their messages. From Asia, NGOs from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Province of China and Singapore called for such measures as the elimination of discrimination against women with HIV /AIDS, equal educational opportunities, legislation against domestic violence and career development support for the young generation.

The panel discussion on the morning of the second day heard regional reports (Asia-Pacific, EU, Middle East, North America, Africa and Central and South America) from panelists on progress made by NGOs since 1995. Ms. June Zeitlin, who represented North America, touched upon the fact that the USA had yet to ratify the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. She requested floor participants to ask their governments how the convention could be ratified.

After that, participants broke up into groups by region and, after lunch, summarized their opinions, through



▲The NGOs from around the world had strong messages for the CSW and government representatives.

regional representatives. The Asia-Pacific raised region issues such as human trafficking, poverty, education and violence against women.

During the afternoon panel discussion, there were reports and a Q&A session on the world economic crisis; women's leadership and millennium development goals in the interest of gender equality as well as peace and economic development.

Exchange with NGOs from around the world via Parallel Events

Besides the Global NGO Forum for Women, there were parallel events with more than 200 NGOs and 70 UN-sponsored events during the CSW session.

KFAW took part mainly in seminars organized by Asian NGOs and deepened exchanges with NGOs from around the world. For example, at the seminar on the "Financial Crisis from Gender Perspective" hosted by the All-China Women's Federation, Ms. Leigh Ellwood-Brown, the president of Soroptimist International Southwest Pacific introduced activities such as job training for women in Indonesia, Thailand and Australia. Also, Ms. Song Wenyan of the All-China Women's Federation introduced activities concerning the empowerment of women such as micro credit loans for women and a mentoring program for women college students who are about to enter the workforce.



◀Seminars involved by active exchanges amongst NGOs from around the world.

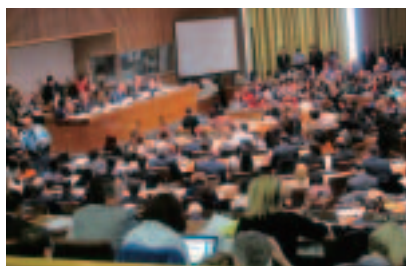


The 54th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

KFAW attended the 54th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women from March 1-5, 2010 (though the session continued to March 12th) at the UN Headquarters in New York. This session marked the 15th year since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action at the 4th World Conference on Women held in Beijing, China in 1995, and served to review the implementation progress of that purport in the various participating countries.

On the second day of the session, "the 15th Anniversary Declaration of the 4th World Conference on Women," which reconfirmed the commitment to the Beijing Platform for Action, was adopted. Moreover an anniversary declaration as well as seven decisions including the improvement of women's status in economic fields were adopted as well.

Moreover, the session was characterized by six panel discussions that served to share topic and successful examples via reports from experts and experienced persons from the various countries. For the interactive expert panel on March 4th, reports were presented and questions were floated back and forth between panelists and governmental representatives from each country on the lessons learned from implementing the Beijing Platform for Action; correlations between the action purport and Millennium Development Goals (MDG); and reasons for the delay in attaining MDGs.



▲CSW scene

Besides the events reported above, a ceremony was held on March 3rd to commemorate International Women's Day.

International Women's Day Commemorative Ceremony

In his opening address for the ceremony, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stressed how gender equality and the empowerment of women were essential to UN activities. He also announced the prompt creation and purport of a UN department specialized in gender. He also stressed that, after aggressive promotions of women to high UN posts over the past 3 years, the number of the women with higher posts have been increased by 40%.



▲Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon offers his message for the commemoration of International Women's Day.

【Panel discussion themes addressed at CSW54】

- (1) Linkages between implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG)
- (2) Regional perspectives in progress achieved and remaining gaps and challenges in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.
- (3) Commemorating 30 years of CEDAW
- (4) Women's economic empowerment in the context of the global economic and financial crises
- (5) UNiTE to End Violence against Women
- (6) Evolving status and role of national mechanisms

CSW parallel events in New York

Dr. Heon Joo Suh, Research Fellow, CWPDI



Paradoxically, since I became a research fellow at Chungnam Women's Policy Development Institute (CWPDI) in 2008, I have not had an opportunity to think seriously about gender issues in general. This is because the focus of my research has been upon a sub-field of social welfare, in particular, the elderly people's welfare in Chungnam Province, South Korea.

My participation at one of 54th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) parallel events as a speaker came to me as an unexpected yet special event. In other words, it has made me consider the entire unequal structure of Korean society in terms of gender and all relations between men and women within it. Specifically, it sparked my interest in gender issues. This experience was possible through the MOU between CWPDI and Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women (KFAW).

As soon as I arrived at U.N. Headquarters and spent

some days attending CSW parallel events, I came to realize women participants' enthusiasms for promoting gender equality and empowerment of women. During the early days of CSW, almost everyday lots of people, most of whom are women from across the globe, made a long line to register and get their photo IDs from the United Nations. They actively observed the CSW sessions, participated at CSW parallel events and discussed the topics raised by the events. These events covered all aspects of gender-related issues such as education, domestic violence, poverty and women's political participation. Fortunately, I had a chance to attend four out of more than a hundred CSW parallel events which took place during my stay in New York. All of them were crowded with women from around the world. They had their own perspectives and shared their opinions or suggestions on the topic which was

dealt with by the event. Let me give you two examples. First, CWPDI and KFAW organized a seminar on the low birth issue both in Japan and South Korea. After listening to two speakers' presentations on the low birth issue, the audience asked and shared constructive questions as well as policy solutions. Second, there was a seminar on the women's movement in rural areas of in Kyrgyzstan. They talked about the difficulties that they had experienced in fighting for gender equality and women's rights as well as about achievements made through their movement in rural areas. After the presentations, people present at the seminar indicated that the women's status in Kyrgyzstan can be further enhanced by making transnational women's solidarity

networks. The discussion of the women's network movement inspired me to write a research paper after coming back home.

Anyway, it was a long trip from Seoul to New York. It took about over fifteen hours flight time, but it was worth doing it. If I have another chance to participate at the CSW and its parallel events, I definitely will go there and share my opinions on gender issues.

Finally, I want to thank all the KFAW staffs, in particular, President Yoshizaki Kuniko who introduced and invited me to the CSW and its parallel event. And I would also like to express my gratitude to my boss Dr. Kyung Sook Kim at CWPDI.

*** Chungcheongnam-do Women's Policy Development Institute (CWPDI) ***

The policy and education think tank established by Chungcheong South Provincial Government in July, 1999, is working towards the building of a "Gender-Equal Welfare Society in Chungcheong South Province." The Institute's activities are creating and developing gender-sensitive policies and education programs; holding workshops and seminars as well as providing programs for effective human resources development for women.

Currently CWPDI has 10 researchers and consists of four teams: Women's Policy and HR-D Team; Social Welfare Team; Multiculturalism Studies Team; and Administrative Team. There are four affiliated centers: Gender Impact Assessment Center; Chungnam Children's Humanity Education Center; Chungnam Childcare Information Center and Chungnam Volunteer Center. (Location at Gongju, Chungcheongnam-do <http://www.cwpdi.re.kr/>)



*** Profile of Chungcheongnam-do, Korea ***

◇Location

Located in central Korea. About 3 1/2 hr by car from Incheon International Airport. (Map)

◇Area

8,585 km² (Approx. 1.7x the area of Fukuoka prefecture.)

◇Population

Approx. 2 million (Jan. 2006)

◇History

Chungcheongnam-do thrived as the central area of the Baekje Kingdom during the Three Kingdoms Period. Gongju was its capital for 63 years from A.D.475. Buyeo was the last capital of the Baekje Kingdom where a Buddhist culture flourished. The Baengmagang River that flows through it used to be known as the Haksukinoe where once Japan, which shared friendly relations with the Baekje Kingdom, went to battle against the joint armies and navies of the Tang and Silla Kingdoms. The area became known as Chungcheongnam in 1896 when Korea created its 13 provinces. Later, in 1932, the provincial seat of government was relocated from Gongju to Daejeon.

◇Sightseeing

The Great Baekje World Festival that will introduce the Baekje culture which flourished about 1600 years ago is scheduled to open for one month from September 18, 2010. Concurrent with this, the Korean government is promoting the 2010 Visit Chungcheong Korea tourism campaign.

The Baekje culture, which is deeply related to Japanese history, is said to be the seat of Asuka Period (593-694). This year, a spotlight is on Chungcheong, with Chungcheong Week which is being feted as a part of the 1300th Anniversary Celebrations of the Nara Heijo-kyo Capital in Nara Prefecture.

◇Check this out!

The Mecca of Asian Ginseng

Geumsan in Chungcheongnam is the world's largest market for Asian ginseng, producing between 80 ~ 90% of all Asian ginseng grown in Korea. It is also famous for the World Ginseng Expo held every year.

Beautifying mineral-rich mud

Located on the western coast of Chungcheongnam, Boryeong is known for its mud packs full of natural minerals to prevent aging of the skin and make skin flexible.



KFAW Network of Asian Researchers

The study and research wing of the Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women (KFAW) staged three seminars as part of the “Early Spring Seminar Series” in January and February 2010. The series was a good opportunity for participants to think about recent issues and gender in a fun way. Gifts were given to those who attended all three seminars.

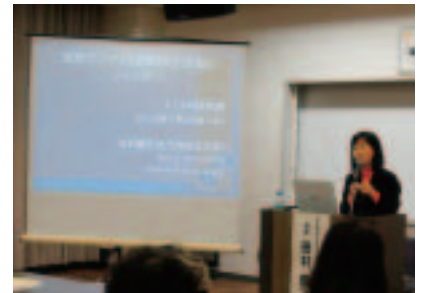
January 19 (Tue.), 2010 18:00 ~ 19:30

“International Movement and Gender in Southeast Asia”

Keiko Tamura, Professor, University of Kitakyushu

In 1995, a law was enacted in the Philippines, which has one of the largest outgoing immigrant worker populations, to protect women engaged in household work in foreign countries. However, in Indonesia, which has sent out many household workers in recent years, there is not a government level structure of protection. And in Singapore, which takes in the most household workers, household workers fall outside of employment laws. Consequently there is no end to the cases of abuse. At the suggestion of NGOs, the Singapore government is changing its position, which includes tighter control of employment agencies and a set minimum requirement for employment contracts. In Southeast Asia

where the movement of peoples is brisk, an urgent appeal has been made for national and regional systems to protect migratory workers and, above all, women migratory workers who are the weakest elements of the workforce.



February 1 (Mon.), 2010 18:30 ~ 20:00

Talking about Gender with UK and Australian Researchers

“International Marriage in Japan Seen from the Perspective of Gender”

Beverly Anne Yamamoto, Full-time Instructor, Graduate School of Human Sciences, Osaka University

This lecture looked at the “myths” and “realities” of international marriages based on interviews with international couples. Study results showed that foreign spouses often comply with Japanese culture, which was

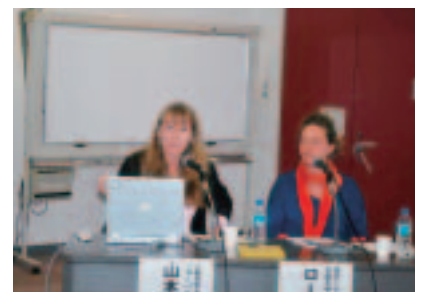
particularly the case with foreign husbands. Foreign wives feel stressed in complying with Japanese culture. Yamamoto talked about the special relationship that forms between international couples because of their respective situations.

“Work and Lifestyles of Australian Women - Currently and Examples”

Laura Dales, Assistant Professor, Discipline Group of Asian Studies, University of Western Australia/Guest Researcher, Graduate School of Human Sciences, Osaka University

The lecture defined as a problem the modern day style of working for consumption. It also presented stories of three Australian women with suggestions on better (more effective) ways to work. Common factors amongst people who successfully balance work and life were raised. Namely sufficient sleep; priority on health; finding time for oneself; interests outside of work, and the importance placed on human relationships were emphasized. After the presentation,

participants drew Dales into active exchange of views on the lifestyle customs of each country and comparisons with Japan.



February 9 (Tue.), 2010 18:30 ~ 20:00

“What Is Korea Doing about its Dwindling Birthrate?”

After an introduction of the Chungcheongnam-do Women's Policy Development Institute (CWPDI) by President Kim Kyung Sook, Research Fellow Heon Joo SUH talked about

“governmental measures for dealing with the dwindling birth rate in Korea.”

The Korean government views their dwindling birth rate

as a serious issue and enacted the Basic Act on Low Fertility and Aged Society in 2005. The government also adopted a Basic Plan on Low Fertility and Aged Society. So explained the following 4 points about the basic plan.

- (1) Central and regional governments deployment of adequate personnel and strengthening performance via training
- (2) Establishment of a governmental office to address the dwindling birthrate issue
- (3) Upgraded PR, i.e., awareness campaigns, etc.
- (4) Promotion of elderly persons' participation in governmental

decisions

Many questions on the dwindling birthrate, which is also occurring in Japan, were posed by participants. Future topics and countermeasures were shared.



THE FORUM WINDOW

India Today: Fieldwork in Kerala, India

We conducted fieldwork in the state of Kerala, southwest India in September 2009. Kerala is said to be special, since it has achieved high levels of development in education and health for both men and women. These levels are equivalent to those of developed countries, despite remaining at a low level of economic development. The average life expectancy at birth for Kerala is ten years longer than that of India. Its literacy rates are 94.2% for men and 87.9% for women, which far exceed the average literacy rate of India (55.3%).

The gender gap in education is one of the major challenges for many developing countries. However, the gap is virtually non-existent in Kerala which initiated the promotion of female education before the British colonization. At present, almost all females complete high-school education and excel at entrance examinations. In addition, female students outnumber male students in both humanities and science courses in colleges and universities. Moreover, many single women are working not only inside the state but also outside the state and even abroad. Only a decade ago, however, few unmarried women lived away from their parent's homes to work. It is now amazing to see the advancement of women's economic participation.

Such changes in the women's situation in Kerala are



reminiscent of those observed for Japanese women. In Japan, the Meiji government conducted policies and projects to promote female education around the end of 19th century. Since then, the women's educational level has steadily increased. It is believed now that Japan has practically achieved gender equality in education. As society and economy are developing, the views towards women's work and marriage are changing. Challenges, however, remain. For example, the number of female students who major in sciences is low. Views of fixed gender roles are still ingrained at school. Women do face inequalities in terms of the employment opportunity, salary and promotion after joining the workforce.

In Kerala, many women mentioned that they were told to stop working after marriage or giving birth. They also stressed it was difficult to balance outside work and domestic work. Furthermore, they said women were disadvantaged both at home and in the workplace. These are the stories often spoken about among Japanese women.

In spite of different living environments, there are issues that can be shared between women in Kerala and Japan, such as challenges and lessons learnt. It is, therefore, very important for Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women to network with women in various countries, learn from each other and act together, in order to create a society where everybody – men, women, the elderly and children – can live happily and comfortably.

Masako Ota, Senior Researcher, KFAW



(Note) This fieldwork was conducted by a team led by Associate Professor Noriko Hattori, Hyogo University of Teacher Education with the Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research provided by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science.

KFAW Holds the 8th JICA Seminar on Gender Mainstreaming Policies for Government Officers

On consignment from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women provides training to officers of central and regional governments of developing nations every year on gender mainstreaming.

The course was staged for the 8th time this year. Its purpose is to train government officers to effectively and comprehensively promote policies for mainstreaming gender perspectives as the means for bringing equal participation in society by both genders in developing countries.

This time, 6 participants from 5 countries took part in training for about 1 month from January 27- February 26, 2010.

The trainees are expected to create programs and action plans for mainstreaming gender in their respective areas of operation and once back home, using the knowledge and skills they acquire in training.

On one day of the last week of training (February 24th), KFAW and the JICA Kyushu International Center co-hosted an event where participants announced country reports to the general public. Each trainee provided information on their respective country including gender issues, obstacles to gender mainstreaming and actions plans for their respective country.

The trainee who caught the attention of the audience that day was Joseph Kazima of Malawi. He spoke of

governments.

The principle content of his action plan was to:

- (1) Request support budget allocations from the Ministry of Finance for gender issues.
- (2) Plan training for public sector officers and particularly those in charge of budgets.
- (3) Hold quarterly review and planning meetings with public sector officers.

Also, he emphasized the following two outcomes for a successful action plan:

- (1) Creation of a Gender Responsive Budget that benefits both men and women
- (2) Greater awareness of gender amongst officers in charge of planning and budgeting

Because of the photos and explanations he weaved into his presentation, the audience reacted favorably with comments such as “it was easy to imagine” and “it was easy to understand because he focused on the budget and set targets.”



▲Country Report (Feb. 24, 2010)

“Scaling up the mainstreaming of gender in the Malawi National Budget.” He also set a target of gaining budget allocations for gender issues by improving the performance of government officers in charge of planning and budgeting for the central and regional



▲Joseph Kazima making his presentation



▲Gule Wamkulu traditional dancing in Malawi (Source: JICA)



▲Lake Malawi National Park (Source: Wikipedia)

Painful Aral Sea

Karakalpakstan (which contains the Aral Sea) an autonomous republic in north-west Uzbekistan is the hardest hit in the region. It is the most painful topic to talk about for every Uzbek person. The shrinking of the Aral Sea in Central Asia is considered to be one of the most dramatic examples of a natural area destroyed by human activities.

For almost 30 years, the use of water for irrigation for the cotton monoculture and the heavy application of insecticides, pesticides, herbicides and defoliant has brought about not only ecological, economic and social insecurity to the resident population but also created a critical situation for human health, especially that of women and children.

The Aral Sea, formerly one of the largest inland seas in the world, has become a symbol of what can go wrong when transboundary water is mismanaged. Dramatic environmental degradation has occurred, with consequences for the 3.5 million people living around it, including 1.5 million children. The sea is located in Central Asia and is shared by the Republic of Karakalpakstan in Uzbekistan, the most affected area, and Kzylorda region in Kazakhstan.

Water pollution is the main environmental problem in this area. According to the local scientists, water quality started to change in the 1970s in parallel with environmental degradation in



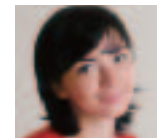
▲Drought Aral Sea.

Karakalpakstan. And most drinking water sources do not comply with water standards in Karakalpakstan. The groundwater table in Karakalpakstan is contaminated with a high level of salts and other minerals.

For the past 40-45 years the population in Karakalpakstan has been using highly mineralized and polluted drinking water. The deteriorating health situation is contributed to the worsening ecological situation and the resulting decline in the regional economy. Diseases seem to increase, particularly rates of anemia, tuberculosis, kidney and liver diseases, respiratory infections, allergies and cancer, which far exceed the rest of the former USSR and present-day Russia.

Average life expectancy in the Kzyl-Orda region of Kazakhstan has declined from 64 to 51 years. Women and children are the most vulnerable. Maternal and infant morbidity as well as mortality are significantly higher in Karakalpakstan and Kzyl-Orda than in other parts of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

ALIKULOVA Narghiza (Uzbekistan)



Anemia, the region's greatest health problem, has been increasing for the last 20 years. In the 1980s only 17-20% of pregnant women had anemia. The level worsens during pregnancy—about 70% of pregnant women in Karakalpakstan have severe anemia by the third trimester. Most of these women have complications during pregnancy and delivery, including hemorrhages. Some 87% of newborn babies are also anemic. Untreated anemia in pregnancy and young children poses a high risk for weak immune systems and a risk for brain damage.

High levels of reproductive pathologies (infertility, miscarriages, complications during pregnancy and in birth) have been observed in this region for more than 20 years. In a survey of 5,000 couples, 16% experienced infertility. The rate of birth abnormalities, another serious consequence of pollution, is also increasing. One in every 20 babies is born with abnormalities, a figure approximately 5 times higher than European countries.

Investigations have shown significantly high levels of organochlorine pesticides. The high levels of such pesticides, detected in most samples of Karakalpak women, pose severe risks for both



▲Woman and living environment.

mothers and their babies. The effects include changes in reproduction and fetal development; disturbance of endocrine function; neurobehavioral changes; soft tissue cancers; dermatological damage; immunosuppression and changes in liver function. These findings have led to the conclusion that, due to the severe pollution of all natural resources in Karakalpakstan, the entire population has been chronically exposed to the chemicals for a long time.

In conclusion the negative environmental factors (pesticides, high mineralization of water, and imbalance of elements such as iodine deficiency) has contributed to negative health consequences for women and children in the Aral Sea region and, in combination with medical and social factors, result in the high level of pathologies, including maternal and infant morbidity and mortality.

However, international community efforts in recent years have largely focused on reversing the ecological damage caused by excessive irrigation.

These initiative has had a tangible impact on improving water supply systems; enhancing health conditions; and to a limited degree creating new economic opportunities.

INSIDE A “KIVVULU”: LIFE IN KAMPALA SLUMS

Hadijah KIBIRA (Uganda)



Uganda, just like any other less developed countries, is a fast urbanizing country. Presently the highest rate of urban growth rate estimated at 5%. One of the places in the country where is in the capital city of Kampala.

With its quick growth and expansion, there has also been a rapid proliferation of slum areas commonly known as “KIVVULU”. These slum areas, located in the valleys of the original Kampala, have resulted from the rapid rural-urban migration. This migration is due to widespread rural poverty, and the high natural population increase in the country.

The living environment in the kivvulu (slum) leaves a lot to be desired. The people stay in temporary housing structures made of mud and wattle and are roofed with polythene papers, tarpaulin or grass. The structures are one to two roomed. They lack windows and ventilators and house 8-10 people. As there are only dividing curtains that separate the living area from the sleeping area, there is no privacy. The children sleep in what makes the living room during day. There is only basic furniture like the head of the household's bed, a chair and a table.

The overriding feature of these areas is overcrowding. There is little or no space between the houses for even access routes or services. There is a mixture of land uses in the slum areas including residential, informal trade activities and film show rooms.

The slum environment is also lacking in clean water and sanitation. Clean water and sanitation are important because the lack of these gives rise to higher levels of susceptibility to

infections. While in other areas, the people can access clean water by rain harvesting from roof tops which is stored in their water tanks, the housing structures in Kivvulu can not be used to harvest any rain water. At the same time, the people in these areas are poor and can only afford to store water in 20 litre containers. All the rain water is wasted and usually ends up flooding these low lying areas. Floods, especially, after a heavy rain are a common phenomenon and another menace to the people in Kivvulu. All household properties are usually soaked and people can not sleep due to the water that fills all houses.

The sanitation in Kivvulu is another sad story. Many habitants lack any form of structure that can be called a toilet. The toilets, when they exist, are makeshift structures of basically shallow holes whose contents can be seen. These temporary holes contents are washed out by the rain. Many people defecate in polythene bags that are strewn all over in the form of garbage. Such conditions have always led to outbreaks of diseases like cholera and deaths due to the same.

In a nut shell, the living environment in the slums is poor. It is a situation that needs to be addressed by the urban planners if sustainable development is to be achieved in the country.



▲A Housing and Sanitation Facility

INFORMATION

On February 22, 2010, the Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women and UNIFEM Kitakyushu co-hosted a lecture by the former governor of Kumamoto Prefecture and current President of Nagasaki International University, Yoshiko Shiotani.

Under the theme of “Think Globally, Act Locally,” she separately raised the cases of environmental pollution; global warming and water resource issues, and connected problems associated with the environment; mankind and society. She stressed that in order to solve these issues, “coexistence” was key, especially concerning the environment, individual cultures and national laws.

On the subject of equal participation in society by men and women, she spoke about an “International Day for Women” which was advocated at an international conference held in Denmark

100 years ago in 1910. Shiotani introduced various episodes over these 100 years in which the status of women has improved. In continuing this trend, she called upon everyone to take steps towards establishing a world of peace and human rights. Specifically, she asked for people to focus on by turning the international community and accomplish what they can in their own area with a sense of mission. In other words, this means “Think Globally, Act Locally.” She received a strong applause from the audience.



From the June 2008 issue, we have capitalized the last names of persons at the beginning of articles. We adopted this policy so that our readers can easily distinguish last names in spite of different customs regarding the writing of family names.



Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women

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KFAW

The Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women (KFAW) was established in October of 1990 with a special government fund for revitalization projects. Subsequently, in 1993, the KFAW was recognized as a foundation by the Ministry of Labour (the present Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare). The purpose of the KFAW is to promote the improvement of women's status through various projects, as well as their mutual understanding and cooperation in Asia.

