

# Asian Breeze

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## The 28<sup>th</sup> Kitakyushu Conference on Asian Women "Who Will Care for You in Your Old Age?"



WOMEN TODAY.....p. 1

### Promoting Women's Contribution to Conflict Resolution and Peace Building

Ms. Hiroko HASHIMOTO,  
Principal of Jumonji High School/Professor, Emeritus of Jumonji University

CURRENT ISSUES SERIES.....p. 2

### Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and Gender (Part 3)

Mr. Tetsuo KONDO, Director of UNDP Representation Office in Tokyo

FEATURES.....pp. 3-7

The 28<sup>th</sup> Kitakyushu Conference on Asian Women  
Reports on FY2017 KFAW Asian Researchers Network Seminar  
The 27<sup>th</sup> KFAW Foreign Correspondent Reports



Mr. Wako ASATO  
Keynote Speaker



## Promoting Women's Contribution to Conflict Resolution and Peace Building



Principal of Jumonji High School/  
Professor Emerita of Jumonji University

Ms. Hiroko HASHIMOTO

The women and peace issue has long been a significantly important issue of gender equality. Indeed, the goals of the 1975 International Women's Year as well as the UN Decade of Women were Equality, Development and Peace.

In 2000, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 1325 which acknowledges the importance of the participation of women and the inclusion of gender perspectives in peace negotiations, humanitarian planning, peacekeeping operations, post-conflict peacebuilding and governance. In addition, the participation of women in politics is also recognized as important for the participation of women in decision making on peace and security. In 2008, UN Security Council resolution 1820 became the first resolution to recognize sexual violence as a tactic of war. Until now, six other resolutions to follow up 1325 and 1820 were adopted by the Security Council.

The Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA), which was adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women held in 1995, has been considered as a holy text for achieving gender equality. Gender mainstreaming is one of the important accomplishments of BPFA. 1325 is the resolution which achieved gender mainstreaming in conflict resolution and peace building first in our history.

Formulation of National Action Plans (NAP) to implement 1325 was started by Denmark in 2005 and followed by other countries. As of 2017, 72 countries among the 193 UN member countries have formulated the NAP. In the Asia and Pacific region, 12 countries including the Philippines(2010), Nepal(2011), Australia(2012), Kyrgyzstan(2013), Republic of Korea and Indonesia(2014), Afghanistan, Japan and New Zealand(2015), Tajikistan and East Timor(2016), Solomon Islands (2017) have formulated NAP.

Special features of the countries which formulated 1325 NAP are developed countries which have provided ODA to countries with conflicts as well as countries which have/had conflict within/outside the respective countries.

The only country which formulated a law on 1325 is the USA. The Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017 was proposed by a parliamentarian of the Democratic Party to ensure that the United States promotes the meaningful participation of women in mediation and negotiation processes seeking to prevent, mitigate, or resolve violent conflicts and was adopted in September 2017.

Japan's NAP was formulated with close collaboration with civil society, such as holding twelve different meetings for drafting, organizing consultation meetings in five local areas including Kitakyushu. Although the contents of the Japan NAP was slightly changed during the final process, the formulation process with GO/

NGO collaboration is innovative and the contents of NAP are comprehensive as it contains actions for recovery from natural disaster.

In 2015, on the 15-year anniversary of 1325, UN Women conducted a global high level study on the implementation of 1325. The results found that although the number of peace agreements which referred to women increased, women's participation in peace negotiation was 9% and female ratio among PKO was 3%. Furthermore, women's participation was concentrated in the lower ranking level. Another study found that the successful rate of peace negotiation was increased when the female ratio in the peace negotiation group was higher.

In July 2016, I participated in the Asia-Pacific Regional Symposium on National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security organized by the Asia-Pacific Regional office of UN Women. At the Symposium, I made a statement on monitoring and evaluation of 1325 NAP, with special emphasis on involvement of civil society. My surprise was that a country where internal conflicts exist explicitly stated that the country has no plan to formulate NAP since there is no conflict in the country.

As the important aspect of women, peace and security (WPS), I would like to discuss the impunity of the perpetrators of gender based violence (GBV) which has been perpetrated even by the officers of the PKO. The victims are not only women, but also, men, LGBT people, and even young girls and boys. In order to prevent GBV, the United Nations and member countries have conducted gender training of military officers and civilians. In the case of the self-defense forces of Japan, after training has been provided to all officers, occurrence of GBV within the force was significantly reduced. In addition to gender training for eradicating GBV, role of school education and media is absolutely essential. Furthermore, I strongly believe that punishment of perpetrators is imperative. UN Secretary General emphasized zero tolerance for GBV. However, there are not so many countries that refer to punishment of the perpetrators of GBV in NAP. This fact should be the reflection of insufficiency of international agreements on punishing perpetrators of GBV.

### Profile

Professor Emerita of Gender Studies of Jumonji University and Principal of Jumonji High School, Japan.  
Japan Representative to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women 2011-2017.  
Member of Asia-Pacific Regional Advisory Group on Women, Peace and Security.  
Member of JICA Advisory Board on Gender Issues  
Published books and articles on gender mainstreaming in government and women, peace and security.



Director of UNDP Representation Office in Tokyo

**Mr. Tetsuo KONDO**

#### Profile

Obtained master of development study degree from Jones International University (UNDP Development Academy) in the U.S. Entered Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1981. After serving at Japanese Embassy to France, former Zaire, Japanese Mission to the UN and others, dispatched to UNDP in 2001. Retired from Foreign Ministry in 2005, served as a senior advisor to UNDP in charge of coordination and funding of East Timor humanitarian assistance, Kosovo Deputy Resident Representative, and Country Director in Chad. Assigned to the current post since January 2014.

As mentioned in my previous articles, Goal 5 of the SDGs is to ensure gender equality and women's empowerment. Now let us consider what our society will look like when gender equality and women's empowerment are achieved. Needless to say, our society should be free from gender based violence and ensure equal rights for women. However, this is not sufficient to say that SDGs Goal 5 is achieved. Although gender gap in the area of health and education is gradually narrowing, the same cannot be said for that in political and economic life. According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report, it may take more than 200 years to achieve economic gender parity given the current pace. Women's political participation has a similar delay. Overall, the remaining challenges to achieve global gender equality are daunting.

High quality education and technology for youth and women are essential for the structural reform and industrialization of the economy; it is the basis of a stable health system and social equilibrium. To say that the empowerment of women is the empowerment of all society is not an overstatement. However, even with the growing presence of women in the labor market, there is a persistent perception that women are responsible for domestic work and childcare. Women expend one to three hours more than men on domestic work, and twice to ten times more on childcare, care of the elderly, and nursing. This prevents women from participating in the labor market, causing gender pay gaps, and compelling many women to resort to informal labor. Uneven sharing of the burden of unpaid care work is thus one of the most significant obstacles to achieving SDGs in the area of gender equality and women's empowerment.

The issues of unpaid labor are not limited to developed countries alone. In Chad, where I was working as the country director of UNDP, a project that distributed multi-functional platforms in the southern pastoral areas brought great changes to the lives of local women. This platform is fueled by diesel engine and serves multiple purposes such as electric power generation, food

processing, and water pumping. The village women are responsible for farm work and caring for children and the elderly, in addition to domestic work such as cooking and collecting water and firewood. The multi-functional platform improves the labor conditions of women and provides opportunities for income generation. By using the machine, women can process shea butter for sale, and the distributed income can be used for their family and the maintenance of the machine. Thus, alleviating the burden of unpaid work generates opportunities for women and the revitalization of the community.

At the World Assembly for Women conference held in Tokyo, I attended a panel on the redistribution of the burden of unpaid work. The conference focused on the significance of the "3R"; In order to tackle the issues working women are facing today, we have to recognize, reduce, and redistribute unpaid care work. Many of you may remember Hilary Clinton's concession speech after her loss to Donald Trump in the 2016 presidential election. She addressed her female supporters saying, "We have still not shattered that highest and hardest glass ceiling." It is true that a thick glass ceiling prevails for women trying to take leadership in society. The Cabinet Office of the government of Japan conducted a survey in 2016 that indicated 40.6% of the respondents were in favor of the notion that "husbands should work outside and wives should stay home to care for their family." In order to break the glass ceiling, each one of us should discard such stereotypes and fight against unconscious gender discrimination.

In 2016, the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) adopted the Nairobi Declaration supporting a cross-sectoral approach to the empowerment of women. TICAD VI noted that the redistribution of the burden of unpaid work will resolve gender disparity and will consequently benefit the continent by adding \$105 billion to its economy. Gender equality is a challenge not only for women but also for all of us. Let us all take action in our daily life to achieve Goal 5 of the SDGs.



# The 28<sup>th</sup>

## Kitakyushu Conference on Asian Women

**Date & Time:** Sat., November 25, 2017, 13:00-16:00

**Venue:** Large Seminar Room, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Kitakyushu Municipal Gender Equality Center, MOVE

KFAW organized a symposium on elder care from the perspective of gender and the acceptance of foreign caregivers to Japan under the theme of "Who Will Care for You in Your Old Age?" In his keynote lecture, Mr. Wako Asato, Associate Professor, Graduate School of Letters, Kyoto University, spoke about the current state of nursing care on the ground in Japan and overseas. During the panel discussion, participants discussed and exchanged ideas about the current state of long-term nursing care and foreign care workers in Taiwan, Province of China, the situation of accepting foreign caregivers at facilities in Japan, and the experiences of a Filipino woman who is active as a care worker in Japan.



### Keynote Speech

#### Mr. Wako ASATO

(Associate Professor, PhD, Graduate School of Letters, Kyoto University)

### Overview of Aging Societies

Traditionally, men have made up the majority of the labor market in Japan, which has resulted in a certain type of sexual division of labor with men as economic providers and women as the main providers of care for children and domestic work. Homogeneity is the source of success in this model and can be viewed as a diagram for progress in Japanese society. However, with declining populations, a rich society cannot be created by men alone. The important and inevitable task of this century will be to explore the creation of a society in which people from all walks of life—men, women, people with disabilities, young people, and foreign nationals—can be active. Nursing care also needs to be supported by a diverse set of people in the same way.



### Overview of Nursing Care in Japan

Conventional care in Japan was traditionally a system of care provided by families and communities, with particular dependence on women and daughters-in-law. However, as care has become socialized, it now comes under the responsibility of the social insurance system.

With the recognition that society should be responsible for nursing care, a system has emerged in Japan to train highly skilled human resources called care workers. Japan started to accept human resources from overseas in 2008 under the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA). The training period for care workers was quite long compared with other countries and Japan had not given thought to training people from overseas, so the system faced difficulties in being accepted at the beginning. However, emphasis shifted to measures for Japanese language education and the national examination, with assistance of about JPY 2 to 2.5 million provided to each person. As a result, the passing rate for foreign national care workers taking the national examination is now approaching 50%, closing in on the passing rate for Japanese nationals, which is between 60% to 70%. This is a clear indication of the importance of human resources development.

There is also criticism about the social costs of fully supporting the development of human resources since it requires an enormous investment. However, if we think about

this, we need to invest more than JPY10 million from the time that a Japanese national is born to when they can actually become caregivers. However, educational expenses for Japanese nationals are not referred to as "costs." But in the case of a foreign national, for example, the costs for Ms. Mia, one of the panelists here today, to acquire her nursing qualifications were borne by her parents and the Government of the Philippines. Japan only bears a slight cost for Japanese language education. Still, criticizing this system as a social cost may not be appropriate. Rather than being critical of social costs due to the difference in the place of birth, we should affirm the diverse human resources taking part in nursing care and create better nursing care on-site.

It is impossible to relocate a company involved in nursing care overseas and operate it like the manufacturing industry. It is necessary to secure care providers on the basis of the lives of those receiving care and ensure a continuous quality, fulfilling lifestyle for patients. However, the salaries for nursing care workers are stipulated in the compensation under the nursing care insurance system, which means that salaries may not necessarily rise even if there is a shortage of human resources. It is not easy to secure caregivers as it becomes more and more difficult to find human resources in societies with declining populations. We may need to recruit workers using different options, including from overseas, and widely explore the possibilities.

The difference between nursing care in Taiwan, Province of China and Japan is that Japan relies heavily on nursing care insurance, while Taiwan, Province of China mobilizes the power of society based on a market to introduce foreign workers, as well as families, communities, and even a nursing care service law that are rooted in traditional norms. East Asia is traditionally family-oriented, with a strong awareness of family care. However, most countries have higher rates of employment for women between their 20s and 40s than Japan. In this background is the employment of foreign domestic workers. In Taiwan, Province of China, there are about 220,000 people involved in domestic and nursing care from Indonesia, the Philippines, and Viet Nam.

Regardless of age, ability or disability, and place of birth, including gender, we must aim to create a society where a diverse set of people can work and develop ideas and innovation based on diverse dreams. Taking advantage of diversity in nursing care, we have started an experiment to create a society that respects diversity.



## Panel Discussion

<Coordinator>

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

### Panelist Presentation 1

**Ms. Yue-Chune LEE**

(Professor, Institute of Health and Welfare  
Policy, National Yang-Ming University)



Policies are being developed with a focus on how to extend the healthy lifespans of the elderly who do not require care, since the proportion of the elderly population in Taiwan, Province of China is expected to account for 38% of the total population over the age of 65 by 2060.

The current Ts'ai Ing-wen Administration in Taiwan, Province of China has continued the nursing care insurance system of the Ma Ying-jeou Administration, where nursing care services are being provided using government taxes as subsidies.

The challenge facing Taiwan, Province of China is a shortage in the number of nursing care workers. Currently, there are about 120,000 care workers being trained, but the retention rate is only 40% and the degree of dependence on foreign workers is very high. Although the most important issue is raising the retention rate of care workers, one reason for employing foreign workers in Taiwan, Province of China is that they can be hired at lower costs. There are also people who are not familiar with the country's long-term care service system. These families use up all their energy caring for relatives, and foreign workers are used as a way to solve this problem. In fact, there are cases in which foreign workers are being forced not only to care for the elderly, but also to work in other jobs, including caring for children at home.

In Taiwan, Province of China, people can receive qualifications to be able to hire foreign care workers for the elderly aged 80 and older who require 24-hour nursing care, people 85 and over who require lighter care, and even people who are severely handicapped. Challenges can be found in securing financial and human resources. However, I believe it is important to improve the wages of nursing care workers since it is not possible to depend on a system for foreign workers over the long term. Following Japan, we must also make an effort to offer language education for foreign workers and provide them with the same level of treatment as care workers in Taiwan, Province of China.

### Panelist Presentation 2

**Ms. Tae ITO**

(Director, Social Welfare Corporation  
"Seizanrikai")



Seizanrikai has an office in Yokkaichi City in Mie Prefecture. We have 1,080 staff, of which 619 are care workers. In addition to 43 workers from Brazil, we also have 66 foreign workers registered with us from the Philippines, Peru, Bolivia, Indonesia, Thailand, and Viet Nam.

There are a number of foreign nationals in areas where foreign workers live near the facility, lending it an atmosphere like Little Brazil. They have very little interaction with Japanese people because there is a shuttle bus to the workplace every day, which means that there are a number of people who cannot speak Japanese.

At work, in a Japanese sense, it is natural for people to do various types of work, without clear demarcations in duties. However, for foreign nationals, each person's job is clear and because there are differences in the view towards labor and



culture, such as not being involved in work other than that which is their own, this became a cause of trouble between Japanese and foreign workers at the beginning.

We set up opportunities for foreign workers to learn Japanese during working hours and also went to visit temples together, ate hot pot stews together, and offered them opportunities to experience Japanese culture. With this type of communication, I was able to properly show my own intentions as a Japanese person.

The chance to employ foreign workers started with the thought of "avoiding difficulties when future care is needed if the number of foreign nationals in the neighborhood would be able to work as well." Since we live together in our communities, I think that we should consider the future of nursing care together.

### Panelist Presentation 3

**Ms. Mia Roselyn OPLAS**

(Certified Care Worker, Special elderly nursing  
home "Dai-ni Keizansou Poppo")



I came to Japan as an exchange student at the age of 17. I returned to Japan in 2010 and graduated from a junior college, applying to be a nursing care worker candidate in the fifth term of the Japan-Philippine Economic Partnership Agreement.

The lifespans of the Filipino people are shorter than those of the Japanese by 15 years, and nursing care is supported by families. Nursing care is not a common profession because there is always one family member on hand for the patients. It is important to rely on someone who thinks about your mental care when you are sick. I feel that this family connection is weakening in Japan.

Nursing care is not only a way to provide assistance for daily life, but also to create a care plan to support a better life for the patient. Care plans are very important in maintaining the lives of the elderly. In addition to the power to observe users and knowledge/judgement capacity, care workers must also know about the details of a disease and a patient's background. However, the real charm of nursing care is to develop and put the best life support into practice to suit each and every person.

There are a number of stories on the news about murders committed by nursing care staff in nursing homes for the elderly and joint suicides caused by anxiety from nursing care. The lack of caregivers is well known and I myself am also tired from working 16-hour night shifts. However, it is even harder for families to provide 24-hour care. Japanese people often carry their problems inside and rarely ask for support from others, which means that these kinds of incidents can happen. The elderly have the right to adequate nursing care and to be respected in their old age. I believe that we must value people as human beings until they take their last breath at the very last minute and last second of their lives. For this purpose, I hope that I can use my heart and skills as a caregiver to enrich each and every person's life.



## “The Forefront of Marriage Situations in the Islamic World”

**Date & time** Sun., October 22, 2017, 14:00-17:00  
**Venue** Small Seminar Room, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Kitakyushu Municipal Gender Equality Center, MOVE  
**Lecturer** Kazuaki TAKEMURA (Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies)  
Hiroko MINESAKI (Associate Professor, Aichi University of Education)  
Kazumi YAMAZAKI (Associate Professor, Yokohama City University)  
Satomi OHGATA (Professor, Kyushu International University)

**Participants** 44

This seminar presented the reality of diversified marriages in Muslim countries, namely Egypt, Iran, and Indonesia.

In Egypt, financial burdens to be shouldered when getting married are increasing. The wedding expenses include costs for holding an engagement reception, arranging housing and purchasing furniture and household goods, giving an amount of money called “sadaq” to the bride by the groom in accordance with the Islamic law, and holding a wedding reception to make the marriage publicly known. The right to divorce, which is quite strong, is granted only to the husband and denied to the wife. The husband can unilaterally end his marriage without the wife’s consent by simply declaring a divorce three times. The divorce thus finalized is irrevocable, and the husband can no longer retract it.

In the case of Iranian wedding, the marriage process is taken in the following order: signing a traditional marriage contract according to the Islamic law, announcing the engagement, holding a wedding ceremony (reception), and having a post-wedding ritual (banquet on the day following



the wedding ceremony). In Iran, a marriage proposal is commonly made to the parents of the prospective bride first. Then, it will be formally accepted if the bride’s parents judge the couple to be a good match. Aside from the traditional marriage, there is a growing trend among young men and women to live together before marriage, as well as to marry a person they meet by chance. There are also cases where husbands are put in jail for failing to pay a deferred mahr.

As one of the diversified forms of marriage in Indonesia, polygamous marriage was introduced. Public opinions towards polygamous marriage are divided even within the country. For instance, there is a significant difference in the ratios of those who oppose or favor polygamy between Jakarta and Lombok, indicating regional disparities are conspicuous. Also, interfaith marriage is prohibited under the Indonesian marriage law. Therefore, if a couple who follow different religions wish to get married, one of them must convert to the same religion as the other.

## “I Still Want to Have a Boy: The Current State of Son Preference in Nepal”

**Date** Fri., December 15, 2017, 14:00-16:00  
**Venue** Small Seminar Room, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Kitakyushu Municipal Gender Equality Center, MOVE  
**Lecturer** Mayuko SANO (Associate Professor, Fukuoka Prefectural University)  
Sangeeta Bhandari (President, Sunrise Orphanage Nepal)

**Participants** 29

In Nepal, the selective abortion of female fetuses is widely practiced among women irrespective of their social hierarchy both in urban and rural areas, which has become a social problem. In this seminar, the reality of prenatal sex selection and its social background were introduced based on the findings of a survey conducted from 2015 to 2017.

Since 1985, the sex ratio in Nepal has been high (105 to 107 males per 100 females), suggesting that the sex selective abortion is suspected to be prevalent. It is pointed out that son preference has become prominent after abortion was legalized in Nepal in 2002. The survey analysis shows that people in urban areas tend to prefer boys compared with those in rural areas, while relatively poor people, those with lower educational backgrounds, and those belonging to a lower caste also have preference for boys.

Ms. Sangeeta Bhandari introduced some Nepali proverbs, such as “To be born a daughter is a lost destiny,” and “The birth of a son paves the way to heaven.” She also gave supplementary explanation



concerning Nepali people’s true feelings about son preference as follows: “Even though people say in public that they wouldn’t mind not having a son, they are not speaking out their honest thoughts,” “Some husbands divorce their wives and remarry in an attempt to have a son,” and “Even educated people wait for the right moment when it is believed to easily conceive a baby boy”. As possible reasons for their preference for boys, she cited the following traditional customs of the country: a successor is essential for the continuation of the family and the caste due to the patriarchy; a son is ranked higher in the inheritance order; a daughter-in-law takes care of her in-laws, whereas a married daughter becomes a member of another family; only male members of a bereaved family can light a funeral pyre; and a dowry, which is the sum of money given to the groom by the bride’s family upon marriage, is considered burdensome.

## Career Development Program for Jiyugaoka High School Students



**Date & Time** Sat., September 30, 2017, 8:55-11:45  
**Venue** Gymnasium, Jiyugaoka High School  
**Lecturers** Koichi MATSUMOTO (Associate Professor, Kyushu International University)  
Naosuke YAMAWAKI (Lecturer, Kyushu Kyoritsu University)  
**Participants** 467 second-year students of Jiyugaoka High School

Following last fiscal year, KFAW gave an outreach lecture to students at Jiyugaoka High School as part of the career development program. Through the lecture and the workshop, the students realized the value and significance of working, while gaining a better understanding of the challenges we face in today’s society and the importance of expressing their own opinions. Later, the students visited 19 business establishments in the city to exchange opinions with their employees, and further made a poster presentation about the establishments they toured. This experience should serve as a good opportunity for the students to think about their futures.



## Ending Child Marriage

Ms. Yojana POKHAREL (Nepal)

Since 1963, child marriage has been illegal in Nepal but it has not been abolished in practice. Factors such as lack of access to education, child labor, social pressures, dowry practices and discrimination against girl children in the family are the major contributors of such practice. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Nepal has the third-highest rate of child marriage in Asia, with more than 40 percent of girls marrying before age 18, and 10 percent before 15, though the minimum age of marriage for both women and men is 20 under Nepali law.

Nepal's government has made some effort to end the practice, but a long-promised national plan has met with delays. In 2014, at the international "Girl Summit" in London, the United Kingdom, Nepal's minister of women, children, and social welfare pledged to strive to end child marriage by 2020. By the time the Nepal government held its own national "Girl Summit" in Kathmandu in March 2016, this goal had shifted to 2030, the end date for the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Experts on this subject say that the government has not done enough to end the practice of child marriage, as there is little evidence of the government working effectively to try to prevent child marriage or mitigate the harm that married children experience.

Things are a bit complicated in rural Nepal where child marriage is being practiced. For example, many parents of young girls and children do not know that child marriage is against the law, and don't see value in investing in education, especially for girls. Thus, girls at their young ages are forced to leave school and get married. Young girls can't complain to the authorities such as the police even if they know their marriage is illegal. And, even they try to complain with the support from NGOs working in this issue, the police are reluctant to file the complaint.

The April 2015 earthquake killed many people and made nearly 4 million people homeless, which has made the situation worse for child marriage. Therefore, out of desperation, many families want to marry off their daughters. Though there has been no proper survey carried out of this matter, many quake-stricken families share the similar story.

Child marriage has various negative consequences such as denial of access to education, serious health problems including death because of early pregnancy, and domestic abuse including violence, sexual violence, and abandonment. A report by the World Bank and the International

## Profile

Yoga Trainer and Facilitator: ACE school  
I have an MBA degree with key subjects such as management and marketing. Previously, I worked as a coordinator at Ambe Murari Sewa Kendra (AMSK), a non-profit organization and oversaw coordinating, managing and reporting activities to donors. In addition, I also act as a resource person for yoga training for various clubs and organizations and help schools develop yoga curriculums for primary and secondary level kids.



Center for Research on Women (ICRW) suggests that child marriage will cost developing countries trillions of dollars by 2030. Likewise, young girls are more likely to suffer from uterine prolapse and obstetric fistula when they get pregnant after marriage due to underdevelopment of their reproductive organs. Girls who marry early also face an increased risk of domestic violence and psychological trauma.

In contrast, ending child marriage would have a large positive effect on the educational attainment of girls and their children, encourage women to have fewer children later in life, and increase women's expected earnings and household welfare. For example, in Nepal the benefit of reduced fertility would be almost \$1 billion.

### Positive change is happening

Authorities from the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare, said that there have been some changes in the law which sets the legal minimum age of marriage for both girls and boys at 20. Violators of this law will be jailed for three years and fined about US \$95. But experts argue that this punishment as a government policy to end child marriage is too weak. And, officials of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) believe that education is the best way to reduce child marriage; however, the challenge is that Nepal has a high dropout rate among girls, who are 10 times more likely to get married.

Nevertheless, things are changing for the better. The Nepal National Demographic Health Survey conducted in 2001 shows that 40 percent of girls between the ages of 15-19 were married, whereas similar surveys show the figure has been dropping to 32.2 percent in 2006, and 28.8 percent in 2011. This is a positive trend, and makes us believe that changes will happen for sure though it takes some time.



Mrs. Nibnana Khatun married at the age of 14 years and gave birth to three children.



Mrs. Sahila Marik married at the age of 15 years.



## Sumiyah : Empowerment from Within

Ms. Astri HIDAYATI (Indonesia)

Sumiyah is a 49-year-old woman living with her husband who works as a fisherman and three children who are currently enrolled in high school and junior high school. Living by the sea where many people work either as fishermen or fishmongers, Sumiyah has found an opportunity to make some extra income for her family, which is also related to fish and fishing.

Due to the fact that she is from a poor family, Sumiyah never got a proper level of education for herself. Therefore, when she got married and tried to support her family's income, all she could do was an informal job that didn't pay much. As a mother of three with a husband who works on the sea for days, Sumiyah was extremely busy managing her time. Financial hardship due to the lack of income made her do many things by herself since she had to save the money.

Until 2010, Sumiyah was working as a snack seller to support her family. The spirit of getting more income to support her family made Sumiyah actively look for information near her home, in case there are job opportunities for her. Sumiyah's home is located not far from the sea and her village is known as a fishing village. Around the area, there is a fish auction center where the fishermen sell their fish. When Sumiyah received news about the opportunity to get a job of deboning milkfish at the auction center, she applied for it. But, first of all, she had to take training for five days. The training was provided by the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries for free of charge. 50 participants took part in the event. Those who passed the training would have the opportunity to work at the auction center.

The five-day training made Sumiyah trained to; 1. remove bones from milkfish, 2. create long-lasting snacks using the fish as the main ingredient. This experience really opened Sumiyah's eyes. Now she got many points of view that might increase her family's income. After passing and completing the training, Sumiyah got the job at the auction center. She became a worker who specializes in deboning milkfish. Her working time is from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. every day. For the job there, she earns approximately Rp.100,000 (almost 1,000 yen). After finishing the job at the auction center, Sumiyah gets home and then prepares to start selling snacks for school children. Indeed Sumiyah still continues her previous activity to double her income. She works until about 5:00 p.m. Sumiyah then proceeds to

## Profile

I graduated from University of Sebelas Maret, majoring in communication. Currently, I am pursuing a master's degree in mass communication at University of Airlangga. I used to work as a communication officer for a government office and decided to resign when my daughter was born. I am also freelancing besides taking care of my daughter. My husband is a journalist and helps a lot in the house.



cook and prepare dinner. After 6:00 p.m., when her husband is about to work as a fisherman, Sumiyah prepares his food, clothes and drink. Her husband comes home on the following day at around 11:00 a.m.

According to Sumiyah, her life drastically changed after 2010 when she completed the training and began to get more income from the auction center. Before 2010, she doubted whether her children could get proper education due to the family's low income. Since she finally got the chance to increase her family's income, all of her children are now at school, which makes her so happy.

Sumiyah's determination to change her life by herself is a picture of how women empowered by the situation can create a good result in the end. Such empowerment was gained due to her own mind or outside pressure. Sumiyah showed us how life can be made better if we try. In the case of Sumiyah, she had the opportunity to empower herself with the help of the government through the training which was provided for free, in addition to her husband's support.

As we have seen above, women's empowerment can happen in many forms. Sumiyah determined to get a better life, and she got the chance. Her determination was supported by the chance provided by the government as well. To some extent, governments must also be there to actively support empowerment. Such trainings as the one attended by Sumiyah have proven to be very useful. Of course the willingness of women to be empowered is the most important point. But at the same time, there should also be some kind of active supports from governments everywhere. Empowerment doesn't have to be complex and complicated. As seen in Sumiyah's case, tailored programs must be provided considering the livelihood and what is needed by women around the area.



Sumiyah is cleaning the fish.