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Japan Bashing and Japan Passing



Chairman of the Board,
Japan for UNHCR

Mr. Saburo TAKIZAWA

The number of asylum seekers in Japan has been increasing since 2010 and reached 10,921 in 2016. Yet only 28 persons were granted refugee status in 2016, a negligible number compared to other industrialized countries. Foreign media has long been “bashing” Japan for not sharing responsibilities to protect refugees fleeing wars and persecutions. This essay attempts to provide some insight into the situation.

To start with, why only a few dozens asylum seekers are granted refugee status? First, Japan is not a popular country for refugees. Most of refugee-producing countries are in Africa and Middle East and cost of air travel to Japan is prohibitively high. Asian refugees are not coming to Japan either. There were only 150 asylum seekers from China in 2015 and none was from Russia or North Korea.

Second, even if an asylum seeker manages to reach Japan, the chance of their getting recognized is slim. Ministry of Justice demands that all the following conditions are met before recognizing “persecution” and granting a refugee status. Namely, persecution exists when:

- ①Harm is done on account of nationality, religion, race, political opinion and/or specific social group
- ②Victim is specifically targeted (not generalized fighting or indiscriminate bombing)
- ③Persecutor is government agencies (not by informal religious or ethnic groups)
- ④Effective domestic protection (such as rule of law) is missing
- ⑤Harm is unbearable and causes grave threat to life/liberty

Few asylum seekers can demonstrate that if he/she is returned to the home country he/she will face the above conditions, hence they fail to be recognized as a refugee.

Third, Japan’s decades-old policy of not accepting immigrants creates an obstacle to refugee acceptance. Prime Minister Abe has repeatedly stated that “Japan will never accept immigration”, meaning that no foreigners will be granted a permanent resident status on arrival. Foreigners are supposed to be in Japan for a specified purpose for a limited period with an intention to return to their home countries. Therefore there is no need to establish a national support system such as language training, children’s schooling and social welfare system. Without economic and social integration systems, refugees who will stay in Japan for life face difficulties. The Ministry of Justice is reluctant to ease the restrictive asylum policy for fear of creating future problems.

Forth, the Japanese public is not receptive to the idea of hosting of refugees. A 2015 Asahi Newspaper survey posed a question if Japan should accept more refugees. Only 24% replied affirmatively and 58% negatively, although most of the Japanese have never met a refugee. Negative image of refugees has prevailed in Japan since 1980s when over 10,000 Indochinese refugees were accepted in Japan. For politicians, refugee issue is risky agenda and only few of them are active in promoting refugee causes in the Diet.

As a result, refugees avoid coming to Japan and we see continued “Japan passing”. It is remarkable that out of five million Syrian refugees only 69 sought asylum in Japan and only 7 were recognized. Japan’s RSD, (Refugee Status Determination) has lost its relevance.

Then why the number of asylum seekers has increased from some 2000 in 2010 to almost 11,000 in 2016? One can say that majority of them are economic migrants from Asian countries such as Nepal, Indonesia, Vietnam and the Philippines who take advantages of the asylum system in the absence of a legal entry mechanism for work purposes. In 2010, the Ministry of Justice introduced a policy of granting work permit to all asylum seekers after 6 months of asylum application to ease their economic difficulties. It opened a loophole in the restrictive immigration system for those people who seek work opportunities in Japan. Big income disparity between Japan and Asian countries, worsening labor shortage in Japan and “No immigration” policy explain the upward asylum trend in Japan.

The small number of recognition and increasing number of asylum seekers lead to a very low rate of recognition (0.2%), deterring “real refugees” to come to Japan while encouraging economic migrants to come to Japan as they can keep working as long as they remain in the asylum system. And small-scale companies employing them are happy as those people do what the Japanese refuse to do. Caught between Japan bashing and Japan passing, Japan’s asylum is in turmoil.

Profile

Born in Nagano Prefecture in 1948. Graduated from Faculty of Liberal Arts, Saitama University and Graduate School of Tokyo Metropolitan University. Served at Ministry of Justice, Haas School of Business, University of California, Berkeley and UN Head Quarter in Geneva in 1981. Served at UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), and UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). After serving as a director of finance to UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), the chief of UNHCR Japan Office and a professor of Toyo Eiwa University, assigned to the current post. His specialty is refugee policies in Japan.

Current Issues Series

Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and Gender (Part 1)



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.

“Now we are able to obtain drinking water nearby instead of having to carry it back from the water station several kilometers away”. These were the words of the women that accompanied UNDP GWA Ms. Misako Konno last summer and who pointed out the water purification equipment after performing their traditional dance and singing songs. In this dry area, Machakos village, the UNDP and a Japanese company collaborated to set up a simple water supply machine in 2013. People now have access to a daily water supply. Women who used to have to carry the water from far away now have time to engage in work to obtain cash income and can send their children to school. Isn’t this what they have always hoped to do?

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that aim at providing a richer quality of life all over the world were adopted by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in September 2015. The global goals for the year 2016-2030 consist of 17 goals and 169 targets. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for the period 2000-2015 included poverty eradication and improved access to water and sanitation have now been transformed into SDGs. The new goals contain, in addition to the items from MDGs, adaptation to climate change, marine environment conservation and sustainable use of energy. The key feature of the new goals is that not only are they for developing countries, but they are also for developed countries to secure their own future. Increasing natural disasters, destruction of the ecosystem, the threat of infectious disease across borders, increasing inequalities and violent extremism caused by the poverty and refugee issue - all these accrued challenges that the world is facing are mutually dependent, interwoven and becoming increasingly difficult to dissolve. The SDGs were formulated to address all these issues at a time and its overarching principle is “to leave no one behind”.

The UNDP has been involved from universal access to HIV education at the grass roots level to the promotion of democratic governance access to justice and capacity

development of government officials to gender equality. In more than 170 countries with 129 offices, we have been responsible for ensuring basic services.

I myself had been working in the reconstruction of many countries victimized in conflict such as Chad, Kosovo, and East Timor before assuming my current position. In these countries, I witnessed many people abused and deprived of human dignity in fear and want. In such societies, it is the women and children who suffer most from such trauma. On the other hand, I learned that facing these problems with integrity can generate the momentum for change. For example, when I was serving in Chad, one of the key reasons for the poor development was early marriage, which is an abuse of a woman’s basic human rights. Many girls were ordered into arranged marriages in their early teens, meaning that these girls give birth at a very young age, even though their bodies are not yet mature enough to handle such conditions. To address this chronic issue, the UN country team including the UNDP urged the head of the country, President Mr. Idriss Déby, to ban early marriage for anyone younger than 18 years of age. The president who initially was negative to this idea due to the social behavior of the local community eventually changed his mind when it was proven that increased access to education, job participation and empowerment for women are favorable indicators to economic development. He finally decided to enact the early marriage ban in 2015, announcing such legislation to the parliament himself. I am convinced that we can change a society, its system, laws and customs with persistent persuasion.

The SDGs can only be achieved when, not only the UN and governments, but each and every one of us on the planet are engaged. Global issues such as gender equality require “our own commitment (JIBUNGOTO in Japanese)”. Let us now consider how we can achieve these 17 goals in our daily life, work and study, and then act together.

“Women and Disasters”

Date: Saturday, February 25th, 2017, 13:30-16:00

Venue: Large Seminar Room, 5th floor, Kitakyushu Gender Equality Center MOVE

Participants: 107

Keynote Lecture: Ms. Yuki MATSUOKA, Head of UNISDR Office in Japan, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR)

Panel Discussion: Ms. Yuki MATSUOKA, Ms. Violeta SEVA (Attorney, Advisor to the City of Makati),
Ms. Shizuyo YOSHIMURA (Representative of We-Love-Mashiki Project “Kimamani”),
Ms. Tomiko WATANABE (Director of Ka-tyan No Chikara Project, Fukushima)

Coordinator: Ms. Mitsuko HORIUCHI (President of KFAW)

KFAW organized a seminar on disaster risk reduction and aftermath reconstruction from a viewpoint of gender equality and women’s empowerment. To this end, we invited a disaster risk reduction expert in the UN as well as leading persons in the field of disaster risk reduction and reconstruction in Japan and overseas.



Keynote Lecture

Sendai Framework and Gender Perspective

Head of UNISDR Office in Japan, United Nations
Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR)
Ms. Yuki MATSUOKA



It is essential to create a disaster resilient community for sustainable development and society. It is, hence, required to ensure five principles; disaster resilience, economic vitality, environmental quality, social & inter-generational equity and quality of life. A participatory process in society is critical to ensure the principles, which includes both women’s and men’s participatory processes from gender perspective.

In 2015, four years after the Great East Japan Earthquake, the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (WCDRR) was held in Sendai City. In the conference, “inclusiveness” was raised as a keyword in addition to “disaster resilience.” It was a pioneering conference for its sensitivity to participation of people with disabilities. Furthermore, one of the topics of ministerial high level sessions was “Women’s leadership in disaster risk reduction.” It suggests that high ranking government officials were aware of women’s issue.

It is “Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030”, the 15-year-guideline for disaster risk reduction, that was adopted in the conference. While developing the Framework, they verified how “Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015” from the Second Conference had been implemented. During the verification process, it was noted that no concrete progress had been made in respective countries in the field of gender when compared with other fields although there had been higher awareness to include gender perspective in disaster risk management.

“Sendai Framework” sets cross-cutting goals for disaster risk reduction, which involves all relevant government ministries and agencies with focusing on four priorities for action. In addition to this, it is stressed that the Framework implementation requires leadership of women and youth,

and inclusive decision making. In this context, women, people with disabilities and aged people are not recognized as vulnerable groups but as “agents of change.” It is expected that gender equal participation is secured and national/local governmental organizations promote such movement.

Japan’s disaster experiences are highly reflected in this Framework adopted at WCDRR that was held in Sendai City, one of the disaster affected areas, four years after Great East Japan Earthquake. Japan’s experiences gave important lessons to the international society.

Panelist’s Talk 1

Pursuing Resilience

Attorney, Advisor to the City of Makati
Ms. Violeta SEVA



Although Global Gender Gap Index of the Philippines ranks at the 7th, higher than that of Japan, the 111th, there still exist many challenges. While global agreements and national legislation including the Philippine Constitution acknowledge women’s roles and value, and the country advocates gender mainstreaming, they are not fully reflected in policies and plans at local level. This is because gender issues are not well understood, gender mainstreaming is a new concept for a local government unit, and gender analysis is not well proceeded.

It is necessary to raise awareness and educate people on gender issues. Capacity building of stakeholders on gender mainstreaming is also essential. It is important to lobby for support from international community, private sectors and other various fields.

Women’s great potentials should be positively utilized and supported in order to enhance resilience of our community. I believe that we can overcome gender barriers and challenges in the Philippines by joining all of our efforts.

Panelist’s Talk 2

We Are the Main Players – History of “Kimamani,” Mashiki Chuo Elementary School Shelter –

Representative, We-Love-Mashiki Project “Kimamani”
Ms. Shizuyo YOSHIMURA



My house was destroyed by Kumamoto Earthquake in April, 2016 and I evacuated to Mashiki Chuo Elementary School. The shelter was so disorganized that we, at first, secured emergency path and exits. One month later when we procured corrugated paper beds and partition boards, we set up a community café and a kids’ space. In the daytime, we opened one curtain after another of the partitions to talk to evacuees so that they did not get isolated. Two months later, the shelter operation became completely independent from government control.

The shelter operation manual generally states that role divisions should be made in the beginning. We, however, wished that the shelter would be a comfortable place where people communicate well. That is why we did not divide roles with an idea of “do something within your capacity if you can.” By doing what we were good at, having been thankful by the others, and regaining our daily lives, we recovered energy to live.

In August, 2016, fortunately, we were able to collectively move to temporary houses next to each other as a result of our request to the government. The activity of “We-Love-Mashiki Project Kimamani” was launched by utilizing our community capacity gained in the shelter in order to rebuild own houses and build disaster public housing in future. Unlike a shelter, there are doors in temporary houses, which are very difficult to open. In order to prevent isolation, solitary death, and shut-in, we are now searching for a way to build visible relationship in the temporary houses.

Panelist’s Talk 3

Toward Happy Reconstruction of Fukushima

Director of Ka-tyan No Chikara Project,
Fukushima
Ms. Tomiko WATANABE



In 2000, when an issue of municipality merger was raised in Iitate Village, the village chose independence and started to deal with growing and processing new varieties of potato and pumpkin. The nuclear power accident occurred when the business finally started to get on track.

Production in Iitate Village became impossible, but I could not give up our activities, hence, we seeded in the destination of evacuation in Fukushima City. It was when a professor of Fukushima University proposed that Ka-tyans (moms or wives) should do some activity to encourage a community through food. I invited every single Ka-tyan to this activity. The first activity was “Yui-mochi Project” to connect people and people, community and community, which put smiles back on Ka-tyans’ faces. Afterwards, we set up “Ka-tyan no Chikara Project” and opened “Abukuma Chaya” to market home-made box lunch and pickles. In labeling the name of Iitate on the food products, we applied much more stringent inspection standards of radioactive substances than the national standards at that time.

In March 2017 the evacuation order of Iitate Village will be relaxed. I will keep on the activities to pass the seeds down the generations. I may face difficulty while doing something, but doing nothing bears no fruit and there will be no growth. If we had stopped seeding “Iitate Yukikko” with an excuse of nuclear accident, we could have had nothing today. We move on by learning from Ka-tyans, our forerunners, with a pride as residents of Iitate Village.

JICA

JICA Training Course on “Gender Mainstreaming Policies for Government Officers 2016” (the Second)

Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women (KFAW) conducts a technical training for central/local government officers in charge of gender mainstreaming in developing countries every year, commissioned by Japan International Cooperation Agency, Kyushu International Center (JICA Kyushu).

In fiscal year 2016, the training was held twice, in June and January. The second one was for nine government officers from nine countries of Afghanistan, Albania, Cambodia, Egypt, Fiji, Nigeria, Pakistan, Panama and Papua New Guinea from Wednesday, January 11th to Friday, February 10th.

Participants are exposed to lectures, workshop sessions, field visits, and presentation sessions of what they achieved from the training in order to comprehensively learn about concept, methodology and theories for gender mainstreaming. On a theme of “Women and Peace” they listened to a female atomic bomb sufferer’s experience after visiting Atomic Bomb

At Atomic Bomb Dome,
Hiroshima



Dome and Peace Memorial Museum in Hiroshima. The Participants stood in front of Atomic Bomb Dome and felt horrible power of destruction, and the Museum displays showed them the fact that people’s ordinary lives had been taken away instantaneously. Some Participants could not hold their tears at the sufferer’s sad and vivid story.

One of the Participants said, “I respect the sufferers’ courage to keep on sharing their tragic experiences with others. I would like to share her story with as many people as possible in my country. I will never forget what happened in Hiroshima.”

The program in Hiroshima on “Women and Peace” gave the Participants an opportunity to think about peace, which is a foundation to promote gender mainstreaming policies, across the borders of countries and religions.

Women's Participation in American Society

Date: Wednesday, January 25, 2017 14:00-15:30

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

Instructor: Ms. Vanessa ZENJI (Consul for Public Affairs, U.S. Consulate Fukuoka)

Participants: 70

Why is the question of working women important to the U.S. and Japan?

By maximizing women's abilities and participation in economic activities, this also brings benefits to the whole economy. The employment of women as it promotes stability and prosperity is important for both the U.S. and Japan. However, in both countries, working women face many challenges. For example, for the most part working women also have to do the majority of housework. Finding childcare facilities is difficult. The cost of these facilities is also high. In addition, women who perform the same work as men often earn less. In the U.S., different from Japan, there is no guaranteed paid leave for childcare.

In the midst of these challenges, women are also largely involved in corporate successes. Sheryl Sandberg, Chief Operating Officer of Facebook, represents one woman with outstanding influence. In her book – *Lean In*, she emphasized the importance of taking risks and seeking opportunities for



leadership. She also encouraged women not to shun work challenges. However, always pushing yourself is not easy. Thus, for working women, networks and mentorship programs are a great plus.

At the Consulate, we are promoting the next generation of women leaders. And, networks between women in everyday life are also important. Through these networks, one can get advice from colleagues and exchange ideas not only to try to solve problems, but also to broaden one's own networks. Growing your network is also an important part for taking one's own career to the next level and for enriched rewarding lifestyle. The U.S. Embassy and U.S. Consulate, while introducing case studies in the U.S., hopes to encourage women's participation in society. We will continue to support the various mentoring and networking programs. In the near future, I hope that working men and women will truly be able to enjoy a fulfilling work-life balance.

28th KFAW Research Report

Date: March 28, 2017, Tuesday, 13:00-15:00

Topic Reporter:

Mitsuko HORIUCHI (KFAW President)

A Brief Review on Gender Equality (Inequality) in Japan, Korea Rep. and the Philippines, Focusing on a Key Area of Economy

Satoko KANZAKI (KFAW Chief Researcher)

Women's Activities and Lifestyles in a Java State Village in Indonesia

Participants: 29

While comparing the performance of the three countries based on the gender gap rankings by the World Economic Forum, KFAW President Mitsuko HORIUCHI outlined the causes, some crucial backgrounds and the challenges in gender equality. The Philippines maintains their overall Index top ten rankings in the world. Japan and Korea Rep. score at lower rankings.

In addition, KFAW Chief Researcher Satoko KANZAKI in her report introduced the activities of a



women's group called PKK [Family Welfare Movement] in the village of Sukaluyu in West Java State in Indonesia. PKK periodically provides welfare services called Posyandu (Post Layanan Terpadu) to local citizens. In those activities, she explained the Posyandu for the elderly in detail.

URL: <http://www.kfaw.or.jp/publication/ajia-josei-kenkyu/>

KFAW 27th foreign Correspondent Report

Role of Women in Peacebuilding in Sri Lanka

Ms. Vindhya WEERATUNGA (Sri Lanka)

A woman's status in Sri Lanka, to a great extent, is influenced by patriarchal values of society, in which her status is dependent on that of her father or husband. However, lately the role of women has evolved to a state where spouses are joint decision-makers on household matters and the welfare of children. Overall, women are considered the nurturers and disseminators of tradition, culture, and community values.

Sri Lanka was plagued with a brutal armed conflict for 26-years that ended in 2009. There have also been uprisings of the anti-state groups during 1987-1989 and communal riots in 1977 and 1983. When looking back at Sri Lanka's history and especially the period when the country was in armed strife, there was a group of unsung heroes: women.

During these times of conflicts, women suffered the most while their sons, husbands or brothers were engaged in military activities. Women who were not economically active became destitute by the loss of their male breadwinners. These women went through psychological trauma, yet had to face the challenges and survive, especially for the sake of their children. They became the mother, the father, the breadwinner and the protector of the family. These made Sri Lankan women more resilient. The number of widows, single mothers and women-headed households increased as a result of the armed conflict. Our experience is that women and girls have been affected differently vis-à-vis their male counterparts by the armed conflicts and associated violence.

Now that the country has a peaceful environment, it is important to consider how women can play a significant role to prevent future conflicts. A peace process involves a number of steps and is deeply gendered. It is disappointing to see in many peace processes that it is mostly men who are in the decision-making positions. This is mainly due to the women's status in society in general, and especially in the political arena. Sri Lankan women have a struggle in the patriarchal culture of the country and a bigger struggle in the political sphere, where they are hardly represented.

Going forward, Sri Lanka needs more women in the political arena. Female representation in Sri Lankan Parliament is less than 6%, which is below average amongst other developing countries. The root causes of conflicts are often political in nature and require a political solution. Women can be instrumental in bringing about a process of building sustainable peace in the country, and this can be accelerated if there were more women in higher-level decision-making positions in the political sphere.

Profile

I hold an Associate of Science degree in Management and a Bachelor of Science in International Business Management from the United States. I also have a Master in Business Administration from the University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka.

I am the Founder/ Chief Executive Officer of LIV International (Private) Limited in Sri Lanka, which is a company committed to providing executive education services.

I am reading for my PhD in Management and Economics at the University of New South Wales in Canberra, Australia.



In order to have sustainable peace, it is vital that women are engaged in the process at every level. Women bring a different perspective to the peace building process as they have been at the receiving end of the armed conflict as 'victims'. Children raised by mothers who oppose violence and promote peace and ethnic harmony grow up to be adults who in turn promote peace. This is the starting point of the chain of peace-building.

In the year 2000, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) formally acknowledged through the creation of Resolution 1325 the changing nature of warfare, in which civilians are increasingly targeted and women continue to be excluded from participation in peace processes. UNSCR 1325 addresses not only the inordinate impact of war on women, but also the pivotal role women should and do play in conflict management, conflict resolution and sustainable peace. As women represent over 51% of Sri Lanka's population, it is crucial that they actively participate and be partners in the peace-building process.

In Summary, women have multiple roles in the peace-building process. First, women must have an equal say in matters that concern peace and harmony in the country. Second, as the primary caretakers of families, they are vital in guiding children from their tender ages to lead peaceful lives. Third, as advocates of peace, women have first-hand experience of repercussions of the war and can build trust and confidence in future generations. Sri Lanka needs to transform, so that women can participate in and contribute significantly to the prevention of future conflicts and sustainable peace-building in the country.



Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality Are at the Core in Bangladesh

Mr. Bablu RAHMAN (Bangladesh)

Bangladeshi women face barriers and disadvantages in nearly every aspect of their lives, including access to health services, economic opportunities, political participation, and the control of finances.

Empowering women to participate fully in economic life across all sectors is essential to build stronger economies, achieve internationally agreed goals for development and sustainability, and improve the quality of life for women, men and their communities.

Through global networks, it should be ensured that women have a real voice in all institutions of governance, so that they can participate equally with men in public dialogue and decision-making, and also exert influence on decisions that will determine the future of their families and countries.

Women's empowerment through gender equality matters in its own rights, because the ability to live the life of one's own choice and be spared from absolute deprivation is a basic human right to be enjoyed by everyone, whether male or female.

In Bangladesh, women's empowerment is at the core of all programs to increase female participation, reduce gender inequality, and raise awareness about the positive impacts of empowering women and girls throughout society.

To address gender-based violence, development providers are working with the government of Bangladesh to implement the Domestic Violence Prevention and Protection Act of 2010 and train human rights defenders—half of them women—to enforce existing human rights laws, including the Domestic Violence Act. They also support grassroots social protection groups made up of social workers, doctors, religious leaders, teachers, and students to monitor domestic violence in their communities, and help victims' access to legal channels to settle domestic disputes and seek recourse.

Bangladesh has experienced a large decrease in excess girl mortality during the past two decades by improving access to clean water, sanitation and waste disposal services, and thereby reducing diarrhea and other infectious diseases. Reduction in maternal mortality was also achieved through improved maternal health care.

Credit programmes for poverty reduction have been successful, making rural destitute women self-reliant through credits provided for self-employment, in 473 upazillas (equivalent to counties) of 64 districts. Through the spread of cell phones and the Internet, more women have gained access to information. Microcredit has helped women's economic attainment, bringing financial stability to families. Nowadays, in Bangladesh, restrictions no longer

Profile

Being the founder of an NPO named 'Micro Initiatives For Total Advancement (MITA)', I am engaged in efforts towards the betterment of children, women, gender equality, and the establishment of human rights and peace in Bangladesh as well as in the world at large. Professionally, I am a journalist, serving in popular newspapers and televisions in Bangladesh.



exist for women in terms of career formation in any field they desire. Women's empowerment through professional attainments is not limited any more.

Women have ventured into professions held only by men in the past. Today they excel at any profession, such as scientists and airline pilots. Men's prejudice has been overcome and women's self-adjustment to the workplace has been facilitated along with the changing social order.

Today in Bangladesh, Women's empowerment and gender equality are focused not only as human rights but also as pathway to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Although women's empowerment has been inspired by changing situations, there is a 12% to 16% increase in violence against women in Bangladesh, according to a report. Violence against women is not only a gender issue but also a disgraceful matter that constitutes human rights violation.

With the introduction of modern facilities to the remotest areas, women's empowerment has been growing with time and opportunities provided both by the government and the private sector.

It is commendable that recognition of women's empowerment in Bangladesh has been highlighted internationally, since Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has received a gold medal from Dauphine University of France for progress and success in women's empowerment in Bangladesh. The Prime Minister received an MDGs Award for Bangladesh's outstanding achievement in the reduction of child mortality. She has been awarded the South-South Award under the banner of ICT for the use of information technology for the development of health of women and children.

With the existing female leadership at the highest level of the country, it is important to reach similar situations at all levels. Thus project/programme plans should always have sufficient budget allocated for gender mainstreaming.



Free bicycle distribution for school girls by the local government's empowering women project.



Girls are cheerful and flying with rejoice at the results of secondary school certificate examination.