

Asian Breeze

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KITAKYUSHU FORUM ON ASIAN WOMEN (KFAW) Semiannual Publication



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Read *Asian Breeze* online:



Women Today

FIG* Gender Equality Forum in Kitakyushu,
on the occasion of the 2021 Artistic and Rhythmic
Gymnastics World Championships

**Gender equality from sports community:
message from the Olympic host nation
to the world**

October 24, 2021



Photo by PICSPO

International Olympic Committee (IOC),
Chair of the Women in Sport Commission

Lydia Nsekera

Keynote Speech

I was born in Burundi, a small country in central Africa. The political context was very difficult when Burundi transitioned from a kingdom to a republic after its independence in 1962. My father was imprisoned for 14 years for political reasons. I was 11 years old when he went to prison in 1977. He left me a letter in December 1977, which read “Lydia, you are the eldest of our children. Help your mother and raise your siblings.” I have always kept these words in my mind since then. The presence of my father and his encouragement were like a guiding light for my future activities. In 2004, I became the president of the Football Federation of Burundi, and since 2017, I have been the president of the Burundi National Olympic Committee.

In addition to these positions, I have been a member of the International Olympic Committee since 2009. I also became a member of the FIFA Council in 2012.

I believe that my education has led me to my current positions. My mother always told me that I must take care of my sisters and brothers. That I must be a role model for them with discipline and ethics. That I should not be afraid to speak my mind politely if something is important, no matter who I am speaking to. Ever since the age of 11, my mother kept telling me these words, which I have always followed.

While I work in the world of football, I did not know anything about sport administration until I entered the Football Federation of Burundi in 1999. When I started at the Federation, I read everything I could find, including the laws of the game, the federation structure, and the FIFA rules and regulations. I even met referees to talk with them. I learned sport administration in the same way as a manager in any organization would learn office management. Since my first entry into the Federation office, I insisted a lot on education. Without the education I received from my parents, who taught me not to be afraid of society’s prejudices, I could not have had access to my current positions. Thus, I stress education when I talk to young women, as my mother and father insisted that I should trust myself and leave behind prejudices.

There are always barriers everywhere. Some of the barriers for women’s career advancement are financial. There is the issue of balancing between family and career. There is also the issue of harassment, which may include sexual, psychological, and sexist comments. The fundamental solution to these problems is to involve

the whole society and change the public mentality. In doing so, media’s involvement is particularly important. Media professionals are to promote gender equality by visiting villages and encouraging residents to change their mindsets.

I believe that gender equality must be promoted through teamwork between men and women, with and toward common objectives. It is not effective if we just promote women among women. It also takes courage to move up to leadership positions. The leader needs to have self-confidence, an impeccable personality, and self-mastery. The leader must also have sense of security and curiosity. At the same time, a sense of justice and equality are just as important. Women in particular, even more than men, must try hard to leave no room for blame. It is also crucial to be certain about one’s decision. When I make decisions, I take time and give them my thorough consideration. After that, I never change my decision once made. In addition, I try my best to lead my team with the consent and sympathy of my staff members.

As we have a patrimonial system in Burundi and I am a widow, I am not the first to speak at social events. In the world of sports, however, I have the first word as the head of the organization. If you have things to say, you must say it. That is why I speak up. If we take actions with tact and strategies, I believe it is possible to gradually change the public mentality.

*International Gymnastics Federation

Profile

Lydia Nsekera, from Burundi, is the Chair of the Women in Sport Commission of the IOC. She has been an IOC member since 2009. She was awarded the Women and Sport Award for Africa from the IOC in 2009, and became the first woman to be elected to the FIFA Council in 2012. In addition to her current position, Nsekera has served on many committees at the IOC, including the Coordination Commission for Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games.

Article provided by Future Investment Laboratory
Edited for *Asian Breeze* by KFAW

Computers and Women's Empowerment (Part 2)



Harumichi Yuasa
Meiji University

Profile

Professor at the Graduate School of Governance Studies, Meiji University since 2021. Previous academic positions include Vice-President and Professor at Institute of Information Security as well as Vice-President and Professor at Kyushu Kokusai (International) University. Yuasa's research focuses on legal and political aspects of internet and information society, including protection of privacy and personal information as well as administrative information handling and disclosure.

With the evolution of computers and information and communication technology, there are more and more opportunities for women to work in workplaces that were once thought to be difficult for them to enter. So is the number of women working in computer and information communication related jobs increasing? In order to increase the number of women who are active in these fields, it is necessary to increase the number of women who learn skills and knowledge in areas related to information science and computer science.

The gap between men and women in the rate of going to higher education in Japan has narrowed considerably in recent years. According to the Basic School Survey by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, the rate of students entering university in 2020 was recorded at 54%. The percentage of female students among all students is 46%, so the gap between men and women seems to be narrowing. In graduate school, however, the percentage of female students is 33% of the total student population.

There is also a big difference in the percentage of students who go to the humanities and social science departments and those who go to the natural sciences departments such as information science and computer-related fields. Meiji University, where I work, has a Department of Information Science in the Faculty of Science and Technology, but the percentage of female students in this Department is less than 10%. The Faculty of Integrated Mathematics and Science has a Department of Network Design but the percentage of female students in this Department is only 15%. Nationally, the percentage of female students is high in faculties and departments of humanities and social sciences, where they study literature, history, foreign languages, nursing, and nursing care, etc. The percentage of female students in faculties and departments of natural sciences, where they study information science and information engineering, is not high.

Why do so few female students enter natural science faculties and departments to study information science and engineering? One of the reasons is that gender stereotyping in the professions remains strong and influential on the choice of faculties and departments. Recently, career education has begun earlier than in the

past, so students are encouraged to think about the type of work they want to do in the future from an early age. Most students decide on the faculty and department they will enter based on this. Because of the stereotype that engineering is a male occupation and clerical work is a female occupation, many female students do not decide to go to faculties and departments in the natural sciences, where they are more likely to find only technical jobs. Since there are few women who are active in the field of computers and information and communication, there are few role models and not many senior students who can give the advice to students. It is difficult for female students to have a concrete image of careers related to information science and information engineering. For this reason, various programs have recently been implemented to support female junior high school and high school students in choosing a career in the sciences. Recurrent education is also important in areas related to computers and information communications.

There is a term called the "dog year." Dogs grow faster than people, and it is said that one year for a dog is equivalent to seven years for a person. The term "dog year" is also used to describe the extremely rapid development of computer-related technology. Even if you have received higher education in computer-related fields at university or graduate school, your abilities and skills will become obsolete if you do not constantly supplement your knowledge of the latest technology. For this reason, in the case of RISS (Registered Information Security Specialist), a national qualification introduced in 2017, the qualification is renewable, and everyone must complete a course when renewing. Many overseas information-related qualifications also require taking a course in order to maintain the qualification.

In other words, even if you did not major in computer-related fields at university or graduate school, you can still learn the latest technical content and knowledge through recurrent education. By doing so, you can acquire the abilities and skills to play an active role in computer-related and information-communication-related fields. With the increasing availability of online recurrent education opportunities in response to the new coronavirus epidemic, it is never too late for women to take advantage of empowerment opportunities.

32nd Kitakyushu Conference on Asian Women (KCAW 2021)

ICT & WOMEN: empowering women in the digital age

Date November 5, 2021

Participants 83

Location Zoom (online)

Live screening at Kitakyushu Municipal Gender Equality Center MOVE

The 32nd Kitakyushu Conference on Asian Women was held on the theme of "ICT & women: empowering women in the digital age." It featured an expert dialogue, a report on a local company's initiatives, and presentations by 3 individuals/NGOs from Japan and Asia on their activities.

Expert Dialogue

Fusako Utsumi, President of the National Women's Education Center (NVEC), Japan
Harumichi Yuasa, Professor at the Graduate School of Governance Studies, Meiji Univ., Japan

The two experts discussed human resources development in the ICT fields, ICT's impact on the lives of people, and information security issues.

In terms of human resources development, the focus was on the current low enrollment rate of female students in the science and technology fields. At the Summer School for High and Junior High School Girls, the NVEC helps female secondary school students aiming to go into science programs at universities with their career decisions by providing them with opportunities to listen to women who pursue a career in science and technology. Recent surveys administered on school teachers show that as many as 23% of them were of the opinion that "male students are better at mathematics and science subjects." Eliminating such unconscious bias is necessary to encourage more women to enroll in university science programs.

Life amid the COVID-19 pandemic has seen the rapid expansion of telework and online classes/seminars using ICT. This has the benefit of enabling the participation of

people from distant locations or of making it easier for students to ask

instructors questions. However, there are also many people who are left behind by this rapid digitization. A hybrid mode of training and education combining in-person and remote methods is necessary to resolve this digital divide.

Lastly, today's diversified internet use raises the issue of information security. For example, there have been cases in which the location of someone's home was identified based on the background shown in a teleconference. This is a serious problem that may result in the violation of privacy or in violence and must be addressed. It is also critical for women to acquire a level of literacy that enables them to identify appropriate information from the deluge of data on the internet.



Good Practice in the Private Sector

ICT to build bright future for all!

Yuki Nishino, Director of the DX Center, SOLNET Corporation, Japan



Yuki Nishino reported on the efforts of her company in Kitakyushu to build a better society through the use of ICT. SOLNET Corporation, founded in 1967 as a data entry company,

has expanded its operations to areas such as system engineering and business infrastructure development in recent years. As such, its female employees have also expanded their work to system development, digital transformation (DX), etc. While not all of them joined the company equipped with the required skills, they have come to acquire them through in-house training, on-the-job training, and self-study.

As an example of how ICT supported telework during the COVID-19 pandemic, SOLNET upgraded web conferencing tools, converted a safety confirmation app for

disasters into a health management tool, and combined them with information sharing tools to create a safe environment for remote system engineering. In addition, by running apps for simplifying administrative procedures, it achieved over 90% telework when a COVID-19 state of emergency was first declared in Japan in April 2020. As a result, not only was the employees' risk of infection by the new coronavirus reduced, but the company was also able to create an improved work-life balance environment for employees who wished to use their commuting time for childcare or for those caring for the elderly at home.

SOLNET also provides workers' health management and monitoring services to other companies, contributing to the creation of their safer workplaces. ICT not only contributes to cost reduction and greater operational efficiency, but can also be leveraged significantly to create employee-friendly workplaces.

CSO Presentations

1 Learning from “online trials” for women with disabilities

Kumiko Usui, DPI (Disabled Peoples’ International) Women’s Network Japan



Kumiko Usui spoke on the importance of the participation of women with disabilities in the ICT sector based on her work with “online trials.”

Women with disabilities share the same obstacles experienced by women in general when it comes to ICT utilization. They suffer from intersectional discrimination on the grounds of their disabilities and gender. This, combined with educational disparity, aggravates their ICT illiteracy. The poverty stemming from the intersectional discrimination is also an issue since it is difficult for them to secure necessary equipment or communication

environment of their own with their meager income. If unable to participate in rapidly increasing online events amid the COVID-19 pandemic, that would inevitably further widen the digital divide and render them isolated. To prevent women with disabilities from being left behind in the area of ICT, the DPI Women’s Network Japan organized online trials to practice holding online meetings. This enhanced each individual’s potential for social participation, thus contributing to their empowerment. ICT need to be developed and popularized with the participation of minorities and women who have traditionally been left behind, and the availability and the usability must be enhanced for them.

2 F-commerce and Businesswomen in Bangladesh

Nishat Taslin Mohana, KFAW Foreign Correspondent 2021–2022, Bangladesh



Citing the success stories of two businesswomen, Nishat Taslin Mohana explained how F-commerce (i.e., Facebook-based business) contributes to the advancement of women entrepreneurs in Bangladesh.

With the large number of users on social media, it has become easier for women entrepreneurs to build networks according to their products and services. This potential customer base generates business opportunities, and Facebook serves as the business platform to build buyer-

seller relationships. Of the products sold on F-commerce, 90% are targeted for women, such as clothes, jewellery, accessories, etc.

F-commerce also helps create a business-friendly environment by enhancing entrepreneurs’ knowledge, improving their skills, sharing information and technical proficiency, and enabling business owners to be financially independent. Women’s entrepreneurship is not only an income-generating activity, but also contributes to creating a gender-equal business environment where women can achieve economic independence.

3 Leave no she behind: amplifying the voice of grassroots women in Sumatra Island through hybrid learning & collective action in pandemic period

Dina Lumbantobing, Co-founder/Coordinator, PERMAMPU Consortium, Indonesia



Focusing on Target 5.b of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), i.e., “Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of

women,” Dina Lumbantobing reported on a grassroots women’s movement project using ICT.

The first outcome of this project is the economic empowerment of women through women credit unions. The main activities of this first outcome were to raise awareness for women’s rights, self-worth, and self-knowledge; to provide training on management of savings and income; and eventually to educate members to build

up together through collective action the courage to speak, take action and shape their lives.

In the past, the members of NGOs used to gather for campaigning on women’s rights, such as elimination of child marriage and legislation of the Sexual Violence Bill. However, since the outbreak of COVID-19, any collective action for capacity building and awareness raising have shifted to virtual with the use of ICT. This, combined with offline discussions, is referred to as “hybrid learning & meeting,” which is now used to organize workshops, seminars, and courses. Women groups use smartphones and apps for training, strategizing, and voicing. With access to ICT, it is possible to amplify voice and influence of grassroots women and to sustain their movement, regardless of any obstacle.

KFAW Career Development Program for High School Students

Let's think about your future: how to work, how to live

Date/Time August 8, 2021

Location Zoom (online)

Participants 57

Organized by Kitakyushu Hitomirai / KFAW

Part 1 Research presentation on the assigned topic "Working and Living"

Presenter Fumika Sunagawa, Third Year, Fukuoka Prefectural Tochiku Senior High School

Part 2 Cherish Yourself

Lecturer Mariko Kurose, Clinical Psychologist

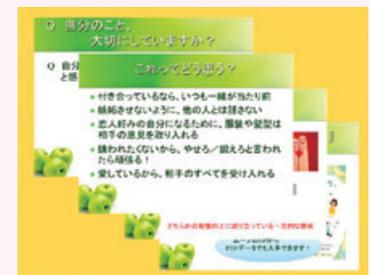
In Part 1, Fumika Sunagawa presented to an audience of her generation the findings of her research on the background to the government's failure to achieve its target of "increasing the share of women in leadership positions to at least 30% by 2020 in all fields in society." She analyzed that the following 4 factors were behind this failure: 1) the basic intent of this policy was not gender equality but to secure workforce; 2) lack of awareness of the need to train female employees; 3) insufficient number of female regular employees to become potential managers; and 4) the anachronistic workstyle premised on long working hours. Fumika reported that reform of the traditional Japanese working environment and better understanding for people with responsibilities both at home and at work are necessary to achieve the government's goal. Lastly, she suggested that young people need to take an interest in social issues, pay attention to politics, and go out to vote for the sake of their own future.

In Part 2, Mariko Kurose lectured on dating violence. She had supervised the production of *Cherish Yourself*, an

educational booklet on dating and sexual violence for youth issued by the Kitakyushu Municipal Gender Equality Center MOVE. Using this booklet as material for her talk, Kurose focused on physical, psychological, social, and economic violence that may occur in an intimate relationship and asked the young audience to ask themselves whether they are in a relationship in which only one member maintains power and control over the other. She talked about the importance of building a relationship of mutual respect in which both parties are able to say no to the partner when faced with things they do not like.



Extract from Fumika's PPT presentation



Extract from Kurose's PPT presentation

KFAW International Understanding Seminar

Consulate Series

Women's empowerment: from the standpoint of multicultural coexistence

Date September 4, 2021

Location Zoom (online)

Participants 68

Organized by KFAW / Kitakyushu Municipal Gender Equality Center MOVE

Speaker Yuki Kondo-Shah (Public Affairs Officer at the U.S. Consulate Fukuoka; Director of the Fukuoka American Center)

Discussion with Masako Katsuki (Executive Officer of the Nishinippon Shimbun; Sales Manager and Chief Executive at the Kitakyushu Head Office)

In the first half, Ms. Kondo-Shah cited statistics to explain the importance of the Biden administration's priority issue of realizing a government with a high level of diversity that mirrors the U.S. society. Women make up over 50% of the total population as well as of bachelor's and master's degree holders. Women also account for about half of the workforce, but political participation is still less than 30%. Yet, the promotion of diversity in the government is important for policymaking in the interest of all American people. For example, in light of the increase in violence against Asian Americans amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the House of Representatives enacted a law against hate crimes in May 2021 at the initiative of its female Asian American members. This is a good example of what could be achieved with the presence of political representatives reflecting the U.S. society.

Ms. Kondo-Shah also suggested 4 key points for communicating with people with different language and cultural backgrounds: (1) listening skills (to accept opinion

of others); (2) willingness to understand people; (3) looking for common, shared values; and (4) working towards the same goal.

In the discussion with Ms. Katsuki in the second half, Ms. Kondo-Shah talked about the need for role models for women's empowerment, how to deal with harassment, and the need to build workplaces and a society where everyone can play an active role, citing as example her problem-solving experience in the process of building her career as a diplomat. This discussion became an opportunity for the participants to deepen their understanding of gender equality.



CSW65 Debrief Report Session

Date June 16, 2021

Location Zoom (online)

Participants 54

Presenters Mitsuko Horiuchi (President of KFAW)

Natsuki Murai (Undergraduate student at Keio University; Member of Japan Youth Platform for Sustainability (JYPS))

Ayano Nagata (Graduate student at the University of Manchester)

Presentation by Mitsuko Horiuchi

The priority theme of the 65th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW65) was “Women’s full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.” The six agreed conclusions consisted of: 1) Strengthen normative, legal, and regulatory frameworks; 2) Prevent and eliminate violence against women in public life; 3) Strengthen gender-responsive institutional reforms; 4) Increase the availability of high-quality financing in support of women’s participation in public life; 5) Strengthen women’s voice and leave no one behind in public life; and 6) Address root causes of gender inequality and eliminate barriers to women’s full and equal participation.

Presentation by youth panelists

Natsuki Murai and Ayano Nagata who took part in KFAW’s NGO parallel event as panelists reported on their presentations (see *Asian Breeze* No. 90) and shared their thoughts on their participation in the event. Natsuki expressed that learning about the views of people of her generation during her advocacy activities was a big driving force, while Ayano indicated that the event provided a valuable opportunity to share and exchange opinions with other panelists on a common theme of “climate change and gender”. Both reported that they were able to reaffirm the importance of intersectionality, which is an essential framework for visualizing and solving problems suffered by particular individuals or groups in any social issue.

33rd KFAW Research Report Session

Date October 2, 2021

Participants 33

Location Zoom (online) / Live screening at Kitakyushu Municipal Gender Equality Center MOVE

Theme Present State and Issues of Local Governments’ Partnership Systems

Reporter Izumi Harada, KFAW Visiting Researcher 2019/20 (Professor, Kagoshima University)

Partnership systems are the local governments’ system of recognizing the relationship of sexual minority couples. While this does not come with legal rights or obligations, it has been receiving public attention as a major step in efforts to guarantee their human rights and improve their social status. Certain municipalities have implemented inter-city agreements to share the recognition when a couple moves to a new city, instituted “family-ship systems” to cover not only the couples but also their families, or even expanded its

application to de facto marriages.

On the other hand, as each local government has a separate system, the definition of and rules governing partnerships differ among municipalities. Even collaborating cities have different policies, thus the procedures for moving in and out are complicated. Nonetheless, it would be a great moral support to be treated like legally married spouses; e.g., being allowed to move into public housing together, to give consent for surgery, or to sign cell phone contracts.

Gender Mainstreaming Policies for Government Officers 2021 [Course A] (Summer 2021)

Commissioned by JICA Kyushu, the Summer 2021 training program of Gender Mainstreaming Policies for Government Officers was held online from May 26 to June 21, 2021, with 7 participants from 5 countries: Moldova, Palestine, Papua New Guinea, Egypt, and Solomon Islands.

This training is targeted for administrative officers from developing countries who work at their national gender machineries and those responsible for gender mainstreaming in other government agencies. The purpose of the program is to develop their capacity to plan, implement, and evaluate policies and projects for gender equality and women’s empowerment. To do this, the participants observe gender equality administration in Japanese national and local

governments as well as initiatives in other sectors. The Summer 2021 program consisted of 10 recorded lectures and 20 live courses comprising lectures, workshops, and presentations.

In this training, participants are required to logically analyze their gender issues and develop an action plan to set goals to solve the problems. Due to constraints related to online training, the participants of the Summer 2021 program had to acquire the necessary skills in a shorter time than usual. To address this challenge, they were each provided with 20 minutes of individual consultation time to help with their action plans, which lead them to successful completion of the task.

No Violence against Women Campaign

Initiative of the Kitakyushu Municipal Gender Equality Center MOVE

Purple Light-up

Each year, the “Purple Light-up” is implemented during the Cabinet Office’s Campaign to Eliminate Violence against Women (November 12-25). Landmarks across the country is lit up in purple in reference to the Purple Ribbon, a symbol of the elimination of violence against women.

In support of this initiative, the Kitakyushu Municipal Gender Equality Center MOVE also lit the rooftop of its building in purple. This year, the pedestrian decks near the JR Kokura Station and Kurosaki Station, which are the two



MOVE

main train stations in the city, were also lit up. This added a beautiful touch to the city’s night-time scenery in the festive atmosphere leading up to Christmas.

MOVE will continue with this initiative so that as many people as possible can see the purple lights, become aware and mindful, and move toward a society that does not tolerate violence against women which tends to become hidden.



JR Kokura Station

Special Lecture

Survivor of sexual violence: you are not alone

Date	November 13, 2021
Location	Kitakyushu Municipal Gender Equality Center MOVE
Speaker	Chie Kudo (survivor of sexual violence) Hisako Ura (Fukuoka Victim Support Center)

MOVE invited Chie Kudo to speak at its special lecture 2021 during the Campaign to Eliminate Violence against Women. Kudo became a victim of sexual violence at the age of eight. She has been working under her real name to tell the story about her life after the assault in order to raise public awareness and to eliminate sexual abuse. Cases of sexual violence do not end when the victim is protected or the perpetrator is arrested. Rather, this often only means the start of the victim’s long and harsh struggle against



hardships and despair, including flashbacks, hyperventilation, addictive disorder, etc. The understanding of people around the victim is imperative for his/her recovery.

Help us improve *Asian Breeze*!

We would like to know what you think about *Asian Breeze* so we can meet readers’ needs and improve our work. Please help us by completing a short survey which is accessible from this QR code. It should only take about 1-2 minutes to complete. All responses will remain confidential.

Deadline: April 30, 2022

Two respondents will be selected to each win a towel handkerchief from IMABARIxSHIMA-SHIMA featuring a unique Kokura-ori design (pattern may vary). Kokura-ori was a traditional textile that was produced at the beginning of the 17th century by the feudal clan in the Kokura area of southern Japan.

