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With the theme "**No one will be left behind in Asia**", we share with you two reports from Indonesia and India.

This year is a mid-term evaluation of national initiative for Sustainable Development Goals.

In this issue, we focus on Asia in particular and invite you to join us in considering ways to achieve SDG 1 (End Poverty) and

SDG 5 (Achieve Gender Equality) through activities in two countries to ensure that no one is left behind.



Protecting Youth from Online "Gender-Based Violence" in Indonesia

- **SUZUKI Mari** (Vice President, Executive Secretary, Asian Community Center 21 (ACC21))

The Asian Community Trust (ACT) was established in 1979 as the first fund-raising type of charitable trust in Japan to build a "Bridge of Mutual Help and Resource Sharing" in civil societies across Asia. A charitable trust is a system whereby donations by individuals and corporations are placed in trust with a trust bank or banks, and the investment profit or principal is

used for public benefit activities. Over the past 42 years, 28 special funds have been established within ACT, and have provided grants for more than 800 projects in a wide range of fields, including education, health care, agriculture, cultural preservation, and support for international students studying in Japan in 15 countries and regions, conducted by private non-

profit organizations (NGOs).

The selection process focuses on whether proposed projects are with gender perspective and designed to promote women's active and initiative participation. Today, projects that incorporate these perspectives are being implemented in various countries in such areas as community organizing, education, training, and microfinance (micro-loans and savings activities aimed at improving livelihoods).

As the secretariat of ACT, ACC21, of which I am a staff member, visits sites in urban, rural, coastal, and mountainous areas of Asian countries, discusses with local people and local organizations, and reports the progress and results of our projects to our supporters in Japan. In this newsletter, I would like to introduce a case study of Indonesia to discuss what women are facing in Asia during the Covid-19 catastrophe.

About 10 years ago, when I visited Nias Island and Medan in northern part of Sumatra, local NGOs and young people told me some stories which pulled my attention. At that time, people in rural areas did not have access to internet with reasonable price, but young people were beginning to become fascinated with the world through social networking services, and incidents of sexual violence and threats between young men and women who met through SNS were on the rise. However, it was difficult for families and schools to immediately grasp the situation and take actions.

Nearly 10 years later in 2021, ACT started to support a project entitled "Protection of youth from online gender-based violence " (Implementing Organization: PUPA Foundation)



in Bengkulu Province on the west coast of Sumatra because we learned that the situation has rapidly worsened with the spread of the Covid-19 outbreak. According to the National Commission on Violence against Women in Indonesia (Komnas Perempuan), the number of gender-based violence cases increased dramatically from 259,150 (in 2016) to 431,471 (in 2019), with Internet based violence (including pornographic photo/video distribution) in particular, increased to 510 cases (in 2020) from 126 cases (in 2019).

In the city of Bengkulu on the west coast of Sumatra (population of approximately 372,000, including 184,000 women), online classes began in the absence of social services to handle such cases, putting youth at risk and revealing the following problems:

- Gender-based violence has increased dramatically with the spread of Covid-19.
- Teens are unaware of the forms and types of gender-based violence, the impact on victims, where to get information, and where incidents occur.
- There are no service agencies in the city to deal with it, and there is no policy to regulate it.
- There are service organizations for women and child victims of violence, but those are not

prepared to address the needs of the victims in any aspect of its knowledge, service structure, or policies.



In this project, the following activities are being undertaken in cooperation with four junior high schools and high schools in the city, the local government, police, and local government organizations and NGOs.

- Raise the awareness and understanding of the youth so that they will also promote the campaign on this issue.
- Share with those who know or have experienced gender-based violence about the campaign.
- Encourage school groups involved in violence prevention and response to expand the scope of the campaign to include gender-based violence.
- Ensure that the follow-up plan for this project is regulated in policies at the school level and at the Bengkulu city level, in the form of circulars, mayoral/governor regulations, and Bengkulu provincial regulations.

During the first year of the project, school personnel understood some cases of gender-based violence, but there were a certain number of people who misunderstood it as part of a joke or a fad/play. There was a case reported to a school teacher that a friend had been victimized,

but the school did not know how to report the incident and was hesitant to address it within the school through the judicial process, preferring to resolve it internally. Therefore, in addition to campaigns through social networking sites and workshops for young people to create content for information dissemination, we are developing campaigns such as "Connect, Speak Up, Donate" and "Don't Click Right Away".

In Indonesia, Law No. 12 of 2022 on the Crime of Sexual Violence was promulgated on May 19, 2010, specifying that "sexual violence



with electronic devices (KSBE)" is a form of criminal act of sexual violence. Under this project, PUPA collaborated with the district and the city, schools, police, legal professionals, and psychologists to develop MELA LAPOR, a system for consultation and filing complaints. The system can be used as a smartphone application, and 15 cases have already been filed during the trial period. Once a complaint is filed, services including legal assistance by partner institutions will be made available.

Creating opportunities for underprivileged people

- **TSURU Saki** (Co-founder, 'Musubite', NPO)

Hello everyone, I am Saki Tsuru, co-founder of 'Musubite' NPO. When I was a student, I travelled to India as a backpacker and saw poverty problems, which inspired me to create a society where every person can achieve what they want to do, regardless of their birth background. In 2019, I therefore founded a company in India that aims to empower women and is currently working to support education in impoverished areas. In this article, I would like to write about my initiatives in employment and education in India.

I could not forget the poverty issues I saw, and after working in Japan for a few years, I returned to India to explore how the poverty issues in India could be solved. I visited various places in India and spoke to many people, from children to adults. Among them, I was impressed by the feelings of mothers living in the slums of Delhi, India's capital, their families were poor and they dropped out of primary school and came to the cities to work as migrants. Lacking education and skills, they have no access to stable employment and work as daily labors on construction sites or as domestic help. They live a hard life with low wages and no day off.

Despite these conditions, she says: "I do not mind spending my whole life in this slum, but I don't want my children to live in such poverty. I want them to get a good education and become independent adults," she said with tears in her eyes. I felt that these women could achieve their aspirations if only they had the chance, so I decided to give it to them.



I thought that if I could create job opportunities for women who wanted to create a better future for their children, and if they could earn a steady income, these children could continue their education and break the cycle of poverty. In this spirit, I set up a cleaning company to train them to become professional housekeepers. We faced many difficulties in setting up this business. Many of the women were illiterate and had difficulty remembering the types of detergents and tools used in the service. We also received a lot of complaints from clients because we could not clean every corner of the house. However, after about three years of providing cleaning services, the women changed for the positive. I created an environment where everyone was highly motivated to work, for example by giving awards to members, who received high ratings from customers. As a result, some members were promoted to supervisors and their salaries increased by about 1.5 times. This had a significant impact on the lives of these women, who are now able to send their children to private schools and save money.

As the project finally got on the right track

after overcoming various difficulties, new problems became apparent. Some women had passed our company's recruitment process and got hired but were unable to work because they could not communicate with or convince their families of their desire to work. Others joined the company but dropped out soon after. Was it their fault they could not convey their desire well or continue working? It seemed to me that the ability to grab opportunities and to persist was also a skill that their upbringing and education had given them. During the recruitment process, I also felt that there was a limit to the scale of the poverty problem that could be tackled of a small company. More than 30 people applied for a position, so I thought about what I could do to break the cycle of poverty for more people.



Though these experiences, I decided to support education, because I wanted to create opportunities for everyone to strive, no matter what background they were born into. Despite various struggles, I decided to change my business of cleaning services. In addition, when we changed our business, the members who worked with us were recognized for the high quality of service they had learnt from us, and all of them were able to find higher earning positions with regular customers, as cleaners for Japanese companies or as employees of cleaning companies.

Since last year, as co-founder of the non-profit organization 'Musubite', I have been supporting

education, initially in the state of Bihar, with the mission of "creating opportunities for those who don't have them".

Bihar is considered the poorest state in India, with a female literacy rate of only 60%, the lowest in the country. It also has a secondary school dropout rate of over 30%, making it one of India's most drop-out states. When we went to these villages in Bihar and talked to adults and children, we found that there were challenges in education. Many children could not do simple arithmetic or read and write, even in upper primary school, because the teachers did not come to school or did not teach them until they understood. Although there are people in the village who are committed to solving the problems of education, there were few educated adults in the village, and it was difficult to recruit teachers. So, with the help of social activists in the village, we recruited teachers from adjacent villages and started a free after-school programme. We begin by providing daily classes to teach basic literacy and math skills. To address the problem of teacher shortages, we introduced projectors into the village after-school schools and connected them online with teachers living in urban areas to create opportunities for higher-level classes and career and moral education. Today, we have been able to provide educational opportunities for more than 270 children.

Not only in Bihar, but there are still many children who do not have the opportunity to learn due to such low levels of education. Furthermore, to achieve our mission of "Reducing the number of people to none who are unable to make an effort due to the external factors and are forced to live under various challenges in impoverished areas", we need to work on a complex link between various social issues, not only education.

We will continue to work towards achieving our mission by engaging with local people and doing whatever we can.



Thank you for reading. Any comments and suggestions are welcome.

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