



International Conference on Empowering Women

Political, legal, economic, and cultural aspects will be discussed by highly regarded experts, men and women, from Japan and four European countries

To mark the occasion of Spain's Presidency of the Council of the European Union, the International Conference on Empowering Women was held in Tokyo. This symposium emphasized the opportunity for a dialogue between Europe and Japan in the area of women empowerment.

Organizers: Instituto Cervantes, Japan Foundation
Partners: Spain Embassy, Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Royal Norwegian Embassy, Friedrich Ebert Foundation, 85 Broads, Nikkei Inc.
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Opening remarks

Opening remarks were given by Carmen Pérez Fragero Rodríguez De Tembleque, Secretary General of Instituto Cervantes, and Kazuo Ogoura, President of the Japan Foundation. Bibiana Aído, Minister of Equality and Audun Lysbakken, Minister of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion also sent their videotaped messages for the opening.



Carmen Pérez Fragero Rodríguez De Tembleque

Kazuo Ogoura

Bibiana Aído Almagro

Audun Lysbakken

Panel 1: Equality through Reform

This session presented examples of gender-sensitive reforms, both recent and projected, in Europe and Japan, incorporating views from the political, legal, and human rights frameworks. Panellists addressed the incentives to make such reforms, their content and their effectiveness, while reflecting on how the processes set in motion by these reforms could inspire local circumstances elsewhere. The session was moderated by Carmen Pérez Fragero Rodríguez De Tembleque, Secretary General of Instituto Cervantes.

Presentation by Ina Brouwer, President of the Dutch Childcare Sector, Former Director of Emancipation Policy, and Member of Parliament

Ina Brouwer reported on the historical background and current issues of the position of women in the Netherlands, from the standpoint that cultural beliefs are affected by historical background. She started by saying that Dutch women were relatively independent and played a rather central role in the “Dutch Golden Age” compared with their counterparts in other European countries.



Ina Brouwer

However, slow industrialization starting in the 19th century had a great influence on their social status and the focus changed for them as to perform a mothering role. From back then, women in upper-class society began to feel that it was shameful to work for money, and only poor women were engaged in wage labor at factories and stores, as well as in fisheries and agriculture. In the first half of the 20th century, a proposals

to prohibit married women from working was introduced 12 times during the period from 1904 to 1940, while women in the civil service were obliged to leave their jobs when they got married until 1957. As a result of this in 1945, 98% of women in the country were housewives. After the 1960s, better-educated women started to look for equal opportunities and the right to work.

Yet women were not much in demand in the Dutch labor market at that time, and instead, immigrants predominated in low-wage jobs. In 1982, work sharing was introduced at a time of high unemployment as well as part-time jobs as a compromise toward the growth in number of well educated women. Consequently, the female labor force participation rate increased from 35% in 1987 to 58% in 2008. The Netherlands also contributed to the empowerment of women in developing a legal system in common with the rest of Europe, for example, by adopting the Equal Pay Act (1975), the General Equal Treatment Act (1995), and the Childcare Act (2005).

Statistically, the status of Dutch women clearly improved in society. For example, the percentage of females among all college graduates increased from 17% in 1965 to 50% in 2010 and the female labor force participation rate also increased from just 17% in 1971 to 60% in 2010. When talking about the current status of women, Ms. Brouwer quoted the words of Paul Samuelson, an American economist, and said that “women are men with less money.”

As shown in the statistical data, there are many more issues to deal with to further empower women in the labor market. Only 5% of business executives are women, 70% of female workers are part-timers, just 43% of women are financially independent, and one in nine is a single mother.

However, aging population in the country will surely increase labor demand in 2011, making female labor participation inevitable. According to a study, five more hours of work per woman are equivalent to 400,000 new jobs. The “Part Time Plus” program was thus introduced to encourage women to work several more hours, but women seem to feel somewhat uncomfortable about that. On the other hand, under the effects of the global financial and economic crisis, no political party advocated women empowerment as one of their major policies during the election campaign in June, 2010. That doesn’t mean there are no problems in this area, instead, there are pressing needs to increase female working hours, improve childcare-conscious working conditions, and create better conditions to allow women to have access to decision-making positions. The OECD report published in 1991 pointed out that only the nations that fully utilize female abilities will succeed in the new economy of the 21st century. OECD’s indication has proved to be right after 20 years said Ms. Brouwer.

Presentation by Soledad Murillo de la Vega, Sociology Professor at Universidad de Salamanca and member of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

Professor Murillo reported on the policies adopted by the Spanish Government to promote female participation in the labor market, in particular, office jobs, as well as specific measures. She first emphasized that the government went beyond the EU Directives to create policy that involves all social entities and focused on its establishment. She pointed out that many national governments tend to treat women as minorities despite the fact that women account for the majority in terms of the population ratio. In Spain, the adoption of the Gender Equality Law was a major breakthrough, under which both public and private sectors are required to employ people according to the principle of gender equality. The government also established a system to evaluate the enforcement status of the Law.



Soledad Murillo de la Vega

She also mentioned about the difference between the “promotion of equality” and “correction of discrimination.” The former is a proactive measure that needs budget and assessment, while the latter often ends up with just a current status analysis. The government established an “excellent company standard” in the equality promotion plan to help companies strictly select from among job applicants from the standpoint of investing in human assets.

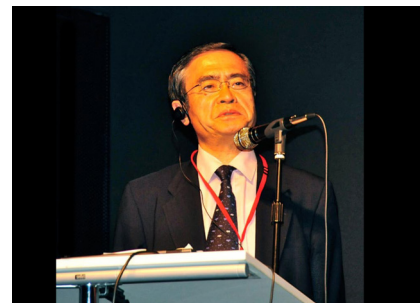
Furthermore, the government policy promotes equality in all spheres of working life; recruitment, promotion, compensation, and displacement. Professor Murrillo said that the policy is never to compromise women, but rather promotes the full use of their working ability, competency and productivity. She also noted that the declining birthrate reflects women’s disadvantageous status in the labor market.

European countries have been talking about the possible introduction of a paternity leave system. Professor Murrillo emphasized that it is wrong to think that the issue is a problem between an individual worker and his/her employer, or the difficulty of balancing family life and company loyalty. Since improper use of talent costs a company, gender equality should be understood as an issue of productivity as well.

The major difference between men and women is just the difference in time to spare affected by a mothering role. It may be necessary to encourage companies to appoint women as officers to optimize the business environment for gender equality. Lastly, Professor Murrillo noted that, when the female ratio of government representatives and corporate executives does not match with their ratio in general population and employees respectively, such gaps represent the unmet excellent company standard.

Presentation by Takashi Kashima, Professor of Jissen Women's University and member of Council for Gender Equality at the Cabinet Office of Japan

Professor Kashima gave a presentation based on the draft report prepared by the Council for Gender Equality to be submitted to the Japanese Government in June, 2010. The government reviews its gender equality policy every five years, and the Council is now developing the draft for the Third Basic Plan for Gender Equality to be implemented next year.



Takashi Kashima

In terms of Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM), Japan is ranked 57th among all 109 surveyed countries, undesirable as a developed country. In specific items, such as “seats in parliament held by women” and “female legislators, senior officials and managers,” the social status of Japanese women has been increasing every year, yet the overall world rank has been declining every year. That means that other countries have improved more significantly than Japan, noted Professor Kashima.

The ratio of female managers is 4.1% at senior official level, 6.8% at manager level, and 12.7% at assistant manager level, totaling just about 10% of all managerial positions. Given the female employment ratio of about 40%, these figures are still low. In terms of the percentage difference between men's and women's wages, women earn just 67.8% that of men. The female employment ratio by age group shows an “M-shaped curve,” with declining patterns seen among the 30 - 34 and 35-39 age groups. Although the female employment ratio has been increasing among those in their thirties, mainly due to an increase in single working women, one out of two married women decides to stay at home. The future issue is to transform this “M-shaped curve” into a “trapezoidal shape” like in European developed countries.

Japan has a strong tendency to divide jobs on stereotypical gender roles. 45% of men think it desirable that women stay at home while men work outside, and 35% of women themselves think so. Japan also needs to be more sensitive to women's rights and eliminate human rights abuses such as sexual harassment and domestic violence. Professor Kashima analyzed that the reason why gender equality has not progressed as expected after 10 years of the enforcement of the Basic Law for a Gender-Equal Society is ultimately the lack of political will strongly expected of the government.

Therefore, proactive positive actions will be incorporated in the Council's latest draft plan. Specifically, the Council suggests that gender quotas of political candidates should be introduced. At present, the ratio of the seats in parliament held by women is 11% in the House of Representatives and 17% in the House of Councilors. The Council argues that the ratio should be increased to more than 30%. This numerative goal was set out initially as the national goal that the percentage of women in leadership positions should be increased to 30%. Since

there is only a small number of female managers in the private sector, the Council also suggests a system to give companies favorable treatment in public procurement when they are actively promoting gender equality.

Thus, the Council's proposals are supposed to produce highly effective results. The Council is made up of 12 cabinet members, 12 representatives from the private sector, and the Prime Minister. The Council meets every three months. Professor Kashima noted that CEDAW (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women) criticized Japan's slow pace of change and thus the key is how far Japan can go for the next five years under the strong promotion system.

Presentation by Regina Frey, Founder of Genderbuero

Dr. Frey reported on the approach of Gender Impact Assessment. This approach was introduced by the European Commission and is applied in Germany. The assessment is designed to analyze the effects of particular legislative bills, policies, measures, and budget on gender equality effects.



Regina Frey

The first example she introduced was a working aid which was developed for the German federal government to support the administration in analysing draft law on its gender equality effect. This example was on an ex-ante analysis: it takes place before the legislation comes into effect.

The second example was on a parallel Gender Impact Assessment: In the European Social Fund (ESF) gender issues are addressed by monitoring the number of women and men who benefit from the Fund. The usage of the budget is assessed and in case half of the budget is not allocated to women, changes are proposed.

Thirdly, she talked about the analysis of the German economic stimulus measures from the viewpoint of gender equality. The analysis was done ex-post (after the packages had been applied). Analysis showed that both men and women are equally enjoying tax benefits. However, in the case of subsidies for new car purchasing, 72% of men have benefited while just 28% of women did so. Also in stimulus programmes for the labor market women were not involved proportionately.

Dr. Frey noted that Gender Impact Assessment requires a legal basis to guarantee gender equality, political will, budget, expertise, and proper methodologies to make a substantial contribution to gender equality. Lastly, Dr. Frey emphasized that in Germany the method of Gender Impact Assessment has not been systematically applied despite the availability of proper tools, and thus the potential of the approach is still to be unfolded .

Exchange of Opinions

Panel 1 presentations were followed by the exchange of opinions among panelists and Q & A sessions with the audience.

Professor Murrillo pointed out that it is not appropriate to cut back welfare systems in line with the short-term goal of reducing fiscal deficits since such systems have longer-term effects. In Spain, political parties are obliged to observe a strict “representative democracy system” and legally required to field 40 to 60% of female candidates in elections.

Ms. Brouwer stressed that a new generation of economists who can explore long-term solutions is strongly needed in the areas of gender equality and economic crisis measures. She also pointed out the necessity of political will to adopt measures from the long-term perspective and the establishment of effective indicators to present specific results.

Ms. Frey stated that unresolved gender issues might produce conflicts in terms of economic crisis and therefore, it is not advisable to simply exclude gender equality from crisis measures. She also pointed out that national governments have failed to produce sufficient results from various systems and organizations established to deal with gender equality because they have not been implemented.

Panel 2: The Economic Case of Empowering Women

In this session, panelists discussed challenges and opportunities for individuals, businesses and the overall economy. The discussion focused on areas such as creating opportunities for women in the workforce, competitive advantages for companies and society, as well as demographic trends such as aging populations and declining birthrates. The session was moderated by Henry Tricks, Tokyo Bureau Chief of the Economist.

Presentation by Toshiaki Tachibanaki, Professor of Economics at Doshisha University (Kyoto)

Professor Tachibanaki mentioned six major points in his presentation. Firstly, he introduced the publication of his book, “The New Paradox for the Japanese Woman: Greater Choice, Greater Inequality” (English translation of his Japanese original “Jo-Jo-Kakusa”). As shown in the title, the book depicts that the gap among women has widened despite their increased choices in the labor market.



Toshiaki Tachibanaki

Secondly, he pointed out that Japan will face a severe workforce shortage due to the on-going declining birthrate, and thus to fill those gaps, there are no other choices but to make women, the elderly and the young join the workforce, as well as to accept immigrants.

Thirdly, he pointed out that Japan should fully introduce equal pay for equal jobs regardless of regular or non-regular status of employment. In Japan, 40% of all workers, mostly women, are non-regular employees and remain in poor work conditions. So, wages should be raised to increase their incentive to work.

Fourthly, he mentioned that a system should be introduced to prevent women from leaving their jobs for child-rearing as a government support to families raising children. In the first place, it is undesirable that women taking childcare leave are placed at a disadvantage. Unfortunately, companies implicitly force women to leave their jobs after childbirth.

Fifthly, one of the causes behind the gap is that female workers are categorized in “sogo-shoku (career-track positions)” or “ippan-shoku (non-career track position)” at the time of employment. The former positions offer the possibility of promotion and cover all male workers, while the latter positions mainly occupied by women offer little chance of being promoted. These days, this division is regarded as problematic since it is “discrimination” in itself. Although the titles have been changed, division is division.

Sixthly, he noted that the tendency for women to enter arts subjects at universities should be changed. Since few women major in social science and science and engineering, changing such disparity of academic background could contribute to the correction of disparities in general.

Presentation by Sakie T. Fukushima, Chairman & Representative Director- Japan, Korn/Ferry International

Ms. Fukushima reported on the characteristics of globally desired talent and why women could be such talent, based on her 20 years of experience in the human capital market.

First, she introduced her background. Being a student at the Department of English Language and Literature of Seisen University, she met Mr. Glen S. Fukushima, her future husband, at the Japan-America Student Conference, which led her to her life today. To support her husband, she studied Japanese-language pedagogy at the Graduate School of International Christian University, and then became a Japanese language teacher at Harvard University. To deepen her career as a teacher, she earned an MA from the Harvard graduate school of Education.



Sakie T. Fukushima

However, recommended by a friend of hers, she gave up teaching for a consultant career and entered to the world of business. After having earned an MBA at Stanford University, she joined Bain & Company and then Korn/Ferry International, where she served as president of the head office from 1995 to 2007. Her experiences opened up for her the road to join the Board of Directors at Kao, Sony, and Benesse Corporations.

Ms. Fukushima has observed the global human resource market for 20 years and concluded that the major characteristics of highly demanded talent at present are: 1) those who can work effectively across national and cultural borders, 2) those who possess a high level of professional skills that transcend a specific organization, 3) those who can solve problems creatively for innovative changes. Generally speaking, he/she is a “professional change agent on a global scale” and one good example is Carlos Ghosn, CEO of Nissan.

Ms. Fukushima uses the method of “Position Spec” in analyzing talent and separates “professional attributes” from “personal attributes.” The former is further segmented into “experience” and “skill,” while the latter into “basic competencies” and “personality.” Important experiences and skills include experiences overseas and communication skill, while essential personal attributes include strategic ways of thinking and sensitivity to diversity.

Ms. Fukushima said that talented women are often endowed with such personal attributes, and overall, women take more risks and are more entrepreneurial than men because women are less entangled in a labyrinth of vested interests and thus might have less opportunities to lose.

Her conclusion after seeing thousands of executives is that business skill does not have anything to do with gender. The general belief is that men have plenty of “decisiveness” and women “sensitivity,” but that is not necessarily true. In other words, “gender” and “nationality” are just part of one’s personality.

However, in Japan, women have less opportunities for hands-on business experiences and therefore, even promising talent cannot improve their skills. As for the number of business executives, the women business executive survey in 2007 shows that there were only 5 female executives in the top 100 Japanese companies. In 2004, the survey by Fortune magazine reported that in 27 Japanese companies in the top 200 in the World, there were only 2 female executives, including Ms. Fukushima herself. The Year 2009 saw a progressive increase with 16 female executives working for the top 100 companies.

Ms. Fukushima warned that, due to the lack of Japanese workers who can act globally and the aging society which engenders an decrease of number of workers, Japan cannot ensure its competitiveness without embracing diverse human resource. She concluded that recruiting the best talent regardless of gender and nationality is in the best interests of companies.

Presentation by Miyuki Takahashi, General Manager, Diversity and Development Office of Nissan

Ms. Takahashi talked about Nissan's policy introduced to promote gender equality in line with the principle of "diversity is our comparative advantage". Nissan started to promote diversity to overcome cultural differences at the time of a business tie-up with Renault that has employed many female officers from the start.



Miyuki Takahashi

In 2004, Nissan established the Diversity and Development Office chaired by CEO Ghosn himself. CEO Ghosn explained that internal diversity is critical in providing products and services that meet customers' various needs. COO Toshiyuki Shiga also explained that diversity promotes productive discussions of various opinions and the formation of a stronger and more creative organization.

A Nissan study shows that 60% of new car purchases are directly or indirectly affected by women and thus it is necessary to produce cars that meet their needs. Nissan SERENA was developed by actively incorporating the opinions of women, in particular, mothers with families, from the planning stage, and became the No.1 model in sales units for three consecutive years from 2007 in the mini-van market. Statistics show that female employees receive higher customer satisfaction in sales and technical supports.

In the midst of a shrinking labor market due to the aging population, promoting diversity in employing talented people is inevitable. As a matter of fact, increased female workers at production plants resulted in an improved work environment based on human engineering without sacrificing productivity. Furthermore, Nissan implements various measures for female workers' career development, from face-to-face interview to special events exclusive for them. Measures for work and life balance include childcare services and telework programs.

Promotion of gender equality takes time, but Nissan believes that the realization of gender equality produces comparative business advantages. The presence of female workers still has a way to go in the automobile industry, and thus extra efforts are required.

Presentation by Johan Petter Tutturen, Country Manager and Country Chair for Det Norske Veritas (DNV) in Japan

Mr. Tutturen gave a brief explanation about DNV and talked about the reason why the company started to promote diversity and their past efforts to increase the ratio of female officers as well as MIKS (Internal Maritime Initiative for Female Workers).

He started by noting that the society's tolerance level is now zero toward failure as shown inter alia in the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Therefore, the role of DNV is to detect, notify and manage potential risks and enable customers to make appropriate decisions to prevent global warming, reduce environmental burden, and minimize risks. Mr. Tutturen said that these areas successfully draw attention although they are not the traditional object of concern to women.



Johan Petter Tutturen

Now DNV is operating at 300 offices in 100 countries with 9,000 employees. One major characteristic of DNV is that it is an independent foundation and a company without shareholders. DNV recognizes that diversity is a key in building good relationships with customers who have many female employees. Furthermore, respecting diversity improves the relations among internal employees and increases motivation and efficiency, eventually contributing to the reduction of labor costs. At the same time, various types of skills can be acquired by respecting diversity, and the resulting increases in creativity, problem solving ability and flexibility also increases the quality of the workforce. Consequently, diversity contributes to the stronger comparative advantage of DNV.

Mr. Tutturen said that DNV is competing for talented persons with major oil companies and other international institutions and have had a 10% growth in number of employees – globally – over the last 5 years. Since then DNV is aiming to be attractive also to female workers, who themselves started to look for job opportunities at companies that open the career path to management positions. In 2004 when he worked for the head office in Oslo, only 4 of 32 departments had female managers. Their internal study showed that male workers are more aggressive in their career, voluntarily apply for promotion, and are good at planning their career.

Accordingly, DNV introduced the MIKS program to arouse managers' interest in diversity, eliminate gender-based discrimination, and encourage qualified female workers to take management positions. Mr. Tutturen said that in the beginning, the program was not favorably accepted by both male and female workers. Under the MIKS program, lectures were given under various themes and eight qualified female workers joined a one-year educational program. As a result, all of them are now in management positions and two of them are at senior level. As company policy, DNV also offers 100% paid childcare leave, offers an alternative choice of reduced working hours to child-rearing employees, and allows them to take paid leave when their child(ren) get(s) sick. At DNV, 31.9% of all employees and 20% of managers are female.

In Norway, a new law was enforced in 2003 to set a goal for the company boards to be made up of at least 40% of women. The law was proposed by the then Minister of Industry and Trade, who emphasized that “the law is not for gender equality, but is a step to convey that diversity itself has a value and contributes to wealth creation.”

Lastly, Mr. Tutturen talked about Yuri Sakurada, a Japanese woman who serves as a country manager of DNV in France and noted that DNV employees can develop their career if they have the desire and can take responsibility for risks.

Exchange of Opinions

Panel 2 presentations were followed by an exchange of opinions among panelists and a Q&A session with the audience.

Ms. Takahashi cited several concerns about female empowerment in Japan : 1) female workers cannot compete with male workers who work extremely long hours, 2) they cannot see the meaning of serving as managers, and 3) they cannot have a clear image of being promoted to management positions due to the lack of domestic examples.

Ms. Fukushima commented that there will be no change expected from Japanese companies unless officers actively engage in gender equality promotion. However, she also pointed out that companies are starting to recognize that women play decisive roles in purchasing particular products and services and their opinions are given more importance within companies.

Mr. Tachibanaki noted that companies are reluctant to re-employ female workers who left jobs for child-rearing, and at the same time, female workers themselves feel hesitant to rejoin the labor market once they have left. He also clearly stated that he remains pessimistic about the improvement of gender equality in the (Japanese) labor market because company officers and politicians continue to have a very conservative mindset.

Panel 3: Empowering Women, Empowering Society

This session brought together international experts on childcare, education and community development to discuss innovative ideas to empower society by maximizing collaboration by both men and women to achieve social progress and personal fulfillment. The session was moderated by Kumi Fujisawa, Vice-President of Think Tank Sophia-Bank.

Presentation by Tetsuya Ando, Founder and CEO, Fathering Japan

Mr. Ando reported on the activities of his NPO Fathering Japan to promote men's parenting. He mentioned that "iku-men" who actively join in childcare have started to draw attention recently. In other words, a paradigm shift ("childrearing is cool") has been occurring among men. "Iku-men" not only participate in child-rearing, but also support their wives for their per-

sonal development by demonstrating thoughtfulness and join in community activities. Recent changes in society, the resultant declining birthrate, environments unfriendly to child-rearing, tendency to marry later, spread of the nuclear family accelerated by urbanization, and lack of community links, all of these social factors help build a public consensus that the participation of fathers in child-rearing is important.



Tetsuya Ando

These days, even married women feel uneasy about having children due to the anxiety of balancing work and child-rearing, difficulty of raising children in the current social environment, problems in the classroom such as bullying, and the “motherhood myth.” To eradicate their worries, Fathering Japan is promoting the model of “two incomes, two care givers” beyond the “gender-based labor division.” Mr. Ando said that more and more women now think they prefer iku-men if they get married, and men also feel liberated and rebuild their life (plan) to live happily with families.

A study conducted by “Nikkei Woman,” a magazine for working women, categorized men into two different types: the tiger man (a man with an old-fashioned way of thinking, ambitious about work, but leaves all household chores to women) and a goat man (a man who is willing to help with the household chores and child-rearing). The overwhelming majority of the responding women said they want to marry a goat man.

Housewives’ major worries these days are: 1) husband related problems, such as extramarital affairs, violence and disinterest in childcare, and 2) isolation from society and mental (personal) breakdown. On the other hand, men’s major worries include limited time for spending with child(ren) due to excessive overtime work. In Japan, men spend only 30 minutes on average on childcare, and eventually, find themselves confused about how to deal with their child(ren), which is called the “father’s deflationary spiral.”

Another problem is marital relationships. In Japan, about 250,000 couples end up divorcing every year, meaning the break-up of one third of all marriages (about 750,000 every year). Furthermore, half of the broken couples have child(ren), producing the problem of child poverty and educational gap. In Japan, mothers come home at 7: 30 pm on average, while fathers at 9:30 pm. These long working hours, including “service overtime,” set off the trend of making men feel hesitant to go home for childcare.

To improve these situations is the objective of Fathering Japan. Major activities include education for fathers to happily participate in childcare, promotion of work-and-life balance, increased awareness of company executives, and regeneration of regional communities. About 130 fathers of various occupations voluntarily form a network and join the activities of Fathering Japan. Since the Childcare and Familycare Leave Law was amended on June 30, 2010, to make it easier for men to take childcare leave, Fathering Japan has been conducting the

“Childcare Leave Father Project.”

The organization hopes that the ratio of men taking childcare leave should be increased from 1.23% to about 10%. In promoting men’s childcare, it concentrates on conveying specific merits. One of the major merits is to relieve mothers’ childcare stress, reportedly the greatest in the world (about 40,000 child abuse cases every year), and thereby, create a stable family atmosphere and eventually bring about work efficiency. In addition to this benefit, the study by the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare shows that whether or not a father helps with the care of their first child affects a mother’s intention to have a second child, and thereby fathers’ participation in childcare should be greatly beneficial to fixing the declining childbirth. Also, the presence of a father in childcare is critical in teaching child(ren) social rules. If fathers join in community activities, they surely can live a fulfilling second life after retirement.

Childcare is also directly linked to the improvement of their abilities to manage their time and subordinates. Fathering Japan offers the “Fathering School,” a comprehensive program of 8 courses to educate men about childcare. In addition, it organizes various events, such as a father and child camp. Fathering Japan also makes policy proposals to support single-father families, encourages men to take childcare leave, and solves the problem of children on the waiting list for admission to a day care center.

Lastly, Mr. Ando emphasized that Fathering Japan is working with the expectation that if a father changes, his family changes, his community changes, his company changes, and eventually society changes.

Presentation by Gry Wigre, CEO of Onmii

Ms. Wigre talked about the environments surrounding current Norwegian women and her own experiences as a founder and president of Onmii.

She first talked about her own career development. She started her own business of outsourcing accounting services as a single mother at the age of 26. The company quickly grew from 26 to 200 employees.



Gry Wigre

She said that in Norway the law amendment increased public awareness, and now gender equality is recognized as a basic human right. For example, 90% of men take childcare leave. And women account for 40% of all business executives nationwide, and 26% of new companies are established and operated by women. When Ms. Wigre established Onmii, her husband understood her desire to work and her talent as an entrepreneur and decided to stay at home for two years.

She also pointed out that women are better at building business networks. However, unfortunately, the majority of capital is owned by men. She noted that the presence of a “network of fans (family members and friends)” is critical when women start their own business by taking risks. The key to Onmii’s success is the formation of an excellent team, and a group of the best sales manager, best promotion manager, and best designer.

Onmii started by thinking about “problem identification,” how best to organize accessories in this case. As a result, accessories are all organized with the use of a “flower button,” which combines beautiful design and functionality. In developing overseas markets, Onmii first chose the Japanese market that is considered the most sophisticated and most difficult for foreign products to enter. Onmii also joined the Gift & Interior Exhibition in Norway, where they were selected as one of the trendiest products of the year. Onmii was also awarded with the Red Dot Design Award.

Ms Wigre said that the key to being a successful business person is to believe in your own business, have motivation, create an excellent team, think about the biggest possible scale from day one, and never underestimate time and money.

Lastly, the message that Ms. Wigre wants to convey to future generations is “knowledge is power.” She emphasized that diligent work and the on-going expansion of business networks could bring success.

Presentation by Jolanda Holwerda, Founding editor of Lof Magazine

Ms. Holwerda talked about her experience as a founder of “Lof,” a magazine for women who want to balance work and family life, with a view to bringing about a cultural change to the Netherlands.



Jolanda Holwerda

She said that traditional Dutch culture tended to think of work and family life as separate domains. Although 75% of women work part-time after childbirth, only 43% of them are financially independent, and just 7% is working full time. Despite the fact that there is a new generation of working mothers, the objective of existing women’s magazines is not to empower women and their content is still published from a traditional viewpoint. At workplaces, women with child(ren) feel that they are taken aside and usually not given opportunities to take up new challenges. Employees tend to think that women lose the desire to work after childbirth, but the fact is that they have a double desire to “work and have a family.”

She started “Lof” to satisfy the needs of such women, and its mission include: 1) to bring about a cultural revolution in the relation between work and private life, 2) to empower women

who want to balance their career and family life, and 3) to work out solutions with other stakeholders in society. She emphasized that this new generation of working mothers doesn't lose its desire to work automatically after childbirth, but simply doesn't like being faced with the dilemma of "childcare or work." Therefore, it is important to recognize the diversifying needs of men and women. Those companies that manage human resources while paying careful attention to their employees as "parents" are investing for the future.

"Lof" is engaged in cross-media development by incorporating various factors to fulfill their missions. In addition to "Lof" magazine for working women, they also publish a yearly magazine about fathering (fathers' childcare). "Lof" conducts an annual survey to identify the "top 100 companies" that are the best for working mothers and fathers. Furthermore, "Lof" posts advice for working mothers on its website, and organizes several events, including the "Loflist Career Event" (career event for Lof readers) and "Lof Next Role Model" (model figures for the next generation of Lof readers). In the area of CSR activities, "Lof" invests money in micro credit projects like "The Hunger Protect" and "Microfinance for Mothers" to build a mechanism in which working Dutch mothers support their counterparts in other countries.

"Lof" has produced various results, including the awards from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, more than 10,000 subscribers, business tie up with major companies and government agencies, and the organization of many successful events. At present, "Lof" is working on establishing a certification system to approve companies that improve working environments to help employees balance work and family life.

Lastly, Ms. Holwerda said that "Lof" will encourage further social participation of women and the liberation of men as the traditional idea of motherhood changes, because companies are gradually shifting the focus to diversity and social cohesion.

Exchange of Opinions

Panel 3 presentations were followed by the exchange of opinions among panelists and a Q&A session with the audience.

Mr. Ando said that it is important for a father to find out his own best balance that is right for his lifestyle and personal goals. He also emphasized the importance of a wife "educating" her husband to manage housekeeping and childcare.

Ms. Wigre noted that working is life itself, since we meet new people, discover new possibilities, and increase self-esteem through jobs.

Ms. Holwerda said that it is hard for men to win understanding from their companies and friends when they get involved in childcare, taking her husband as an example. In the relation between a woman and her job, there are two aspects of "will": one is the will to increase job

skills and the other is the will to win the understanding of her friends and acquaintances. Ms. Holwerda mentioned that women are not successfully attempting to obtain such understanding and therefore have yet to enter into various fields.

Roundtable discussion



Lastly, all panelists were invited to participate in the roundtable, moderated by Rosa María Mollo, Chief correspondent to Asia-Pacific, Television Española, Spain. The following are the main themes for the roundtable and panelists' opinions.

Prospect of Gender Equality in Japan

Mr. Ando stated his idea that Japan takes the role of learning from European experiences and relaying to other Asian countries, since Japan lags behind Europe but remains ahead of other Asian nations. He also mentioned that the future successful model of a father is not to “work a lot and earn a lot,” but should be changed to spend time with his family and contribute to his community.

Mr. Kashima pointed out that the current Japanese labor market, with one in three being non-regular workers, is far from the ideal, and another problem is that the attitude toward gender-based role sharing remains unchanged despite the existence of many double-income families. He noted that, as part of the solutions, the Council will first propose establishing a law to realize equal pay for equal jobs under the Third Basic Plan for Gender Equality.

Mr. Tachibanaki emphasized that one of the biggest issues in Japan is to solve the problem of the declining birthrate, closely related to gender equality.

Ms. Wigre introduced an example that, thanks to the efforts of previous generations, gender equality is now considered a basic human right in Norway, and predicted that it will take time to bring about the same revolution in Japan as well.

Gender Equality at Companies and Workplaces

Mr. Tuttunen noted that, although the biggest investment in life is to get married and have chil-

dren, unfortunately it is not considered as a priority in most cases. Therefore, it is important to have a consciousness that childcare is a “joint responsibility,” not the sole responsibility of either party, and to pursue diversity at workplaces that promote family protection.

Ms. Takahashi pointed out that unfortunately officers and executives at Japanese private companies have no intention of changing their own values with a view to contributing to society. Therefore, she noted that she always tries to promote the idea that “diversity produces businesses and respecting diversity contributes to increased global competitiveness.”

Ms. Murillo mentioned that “gender equality” can be considered just like the old “in-house education”. Employee education was once considered as “costs,” but now as “investment,” and in the future, a similar change will occur in the area of gender equality. She also stated that the developed countries should recognize childcare as a human capital measure, not as a personal matter, if they want to stop aging population. In addition, she mentioned that the idea of “competitiveness” sounds so greedy and economic ideas themselves should be drastically changed.

Current Society and Economy and Gender Equality

Ms. Frey stressed that, since gender equality can bring a fulfilling life to both men and women, we should go beyond the picture of conflict between “we, women” and “they, men” to incorporate the idea of “gender democracy” under which both men and women can build a better society jointly and severally.

Ms. Holwerda pointed out that the same old discussion has been repeated about men and women at companies since the 1980s and the renovation toward gender equality should not be postponed any longer. She emphasized that the economic crisis has brought an opportunity to change.

Ms. Fujisawa mentioned that the industrialization in developed countries has suddenly produced various problems, including financial crisis and aging population. Therefore, it is important to “go back to basics” to get back the idea of a working style that can contribute to society. She added that “competition,” in both living creatures and societies, is not to deny the presence of an opposite, but one aspect in the course of evolving toward diversity. In that context, it is desirable that various working styles exist from a big company to one woman personal business.

Ms. Brouwer stated that gender equality should be further expanded to be a global issue of “gender development.” To that end, she emphasized, going beyond the boundaries as an economic issue and gender issue, that both political and business communities should actively discuss “gender development” to have it become deeply rooted in society.