

# NWEC

## NEWSLETTER

A Biannual Publication of the National Women's Education Centre of Japan

### INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON WOMEN'S STUDIES



Symposium

#### I. Outline and purpose of the programme

Since 1980, the National Women's Education Centre, in collaboration with researchers, has been holding courses on women's studies with a view to providing information and bridging theory and practice.

This year, NWEC organized an international seminar as a wrap up of the courses held in the past nine years. The seminar, held under the theme, "Global Perspectives on Changing Sex-role" was designed to discuss future tasks and prospects of women's studies. Seven scholars from six countries (Australia, Bangladesh, France, Republic of Korea, Netherlands and the United States) were invited to examine issues in women's life from inter-disciplinary and global perspectives.

The four-day seminar which began on Thursday, November 23 was participated by 192 persons including seven reporters from overseas and fourteen from Japan. There were seven men. Public symposium was attended by 274 persons (including fourteen men). The programme is outlined below:

- (1) Open symposium : GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON CHANGING SEX-ROLE
- (2) Session I : FAMILY (report and discussion)
- (3) Session II : WORK (report and discussion)
- (4) Session III : SEXUALITY (report and discussion)
- (5) Session IV : EDUCATION (report and discussion)
- (6) Workshop : Group discussion on FAMILY, WORK, SEXUALITY and EDUCATION
- (7) Speakout session

Members of the Steering Committee were: Ms. Masako Amano, Professor, Chiba University; Ms. Chizuko Ueno, Associate Professor, Kyoto Seika University; Ms. Harueko Kato, Professor, Tokyo Women's Christian University; Ms. Yoshiko Kuba, Professor, Tokyo Gakugei University; Ms. Hiroko Hara, Professor, Ochanomizu University; Ms. Mioko Fujieda, Professor, Kyoto Seika University; Ms. Kuniko Funabashi, Researcher on women's studies.

#### II. Outline of reports at the International Seminar on Women's Studies

##### (1) Symposium: GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON CHANGING SEX-ROLE

Reports were made on the present sex role in the industrialized as well as developing countries. After discussions on what might be done to change sex-roles, the following issues were raised.

##### 1) "Sex and Gender: Changing Conceptualization of Sex-roles in the Last Forty Years: from Sex-roles to Gender"

Ms. Christine Delphy, Researcher,  
Centre National de la Scientifique (France)

Sex represents biological difference between male and female while gender is a general term given to socially and culturally determined roles of man and woman, and is therefore, a variable. We are apt to think of gender within the framework of sex and treat social discrepancies between man and woman as biological differences. This is because the concept of gender had evolved from that of the sex.

In reality man and woman are cultural products of the society constructed on hierarchical relationship of gender. They do not represent natural biological differences. A society free of hierarchy, therefore, will help eliminate sex-roles. If women emulate men within the current hierarchical relationships then all men and women will be rulers.

It is difficult to imagine a society where men and women enjoy equality from the current sets of relationships. We must mobilize our knowledge and imagination to examine a new relationship between man and woman and create an egalitarian society liberated from hierarchy.

##### 2) "Development and Sex-role: Reproductive Relation and Political Economy"

Ms. Farida Akhter, Executive Director,  
UBINIG (Policy Research for Development  
Alternative) (Bangladesh)



Reproduction has become a new field of capitalistic investment in industrial societies in which human life is produced through surrogate mothers and in-vitro fertilization. Social relations of reproduction (meaning relationships needed to sustain reproductive capacity to preserve and produce human species) is reduced to a capitalistic relationship of production. Furthermore, the late phase capitalism is intervening into the reproductive field of non-capitalist societies in the name of development. Population control is being carried out in the name of family planning activities.

In both the industrial and developing societies there is a striking similarity. In both women are reduced to a passive natural existence lacking any subjectivity. It is historically required of women to free their creative energies to resist destructive forces of late capitalism.

3) *"Post-industrialization and Restructuring of Gender Roles"*

Ms. Chizuko Ueno, Associate Professor,  
Kyoto Seika University (Japan)

In spite of the generally held myth that women enjoy individuality and equality, gender differences existed during the modern ages and was exploited by the capital. The relationship between capitalism and gender has been changing according to the level of the development of capitalism. Feminism arose to challenge this exploitation.

The fourth period of post-industrialism created a labour market which was independent of the gender because of expanded job opportunities for women in service industry, low wage and unskilled sectors and the packaging of house-work as a service. New problems, however, are being created such as polarization of women's work. This is to say that while there is on one hand an elite group of work not linked to gender there exists on the other hand a mass market very much restricted and limited by gender. In addition there is an ongoing global re-alignment of patriarchy in a new form.

This is to say the erstwhile housework is now being replaced with marginal labour taken up by other less fortunate women, the aged or migrant workers. The issue for today's feminism is to fight against the divisive strategy of the capital by creating feminist international consolidating men and women of all ages, class, race and nationality.

(2) **Session I: FAMILY**

The session dealt with reproductive technology and motherhood in Germany, China and Japan.

1) *"Reproductive Technologies: Choice or Control?"*

Ms. Renate Klein, Research Fellow,  
Deakin University (Australia)

Development of reproductive technologies (test-tube baby, surrogate mother, freezing eggs and embryos, egg banks, etc.) are robbing women of their right to refuse such technologies and to control her own body. IVF (in vitro fertilization), an example of reproductive technology, is by and large a failed technology, giving the woman a healthy live child in only 5-10%. But experiments continue because eggs appropriated via IVF technology serve to treat male infertility.

Furthermore, IVF research has become interlinked with development of contraceptive vaccine. Women in developing countries are being used for such experiments. What is advertised as "choice" is a choice only for a few privileged white women while in reality the "choice" is nothing but "control" of ALL women in ALL parts of the world. We must recognize this and stop the technology right now.

2) *"Motherhood in Germany -- Past and Present"*

Ms. Toshiko Sumizawa, Senior Lecturer,  
Ritsumeikan University (Japan)

Women's movement in Germany has always evolved around "motherhood" with its appreciation varying greatly from time to time or depending on circumstances. When the second era of feminism emerged in Germany towards the end of the 1960s, feminists flatly denied the "role of woman". The era was characterized by denial of marriage as an institution, rise in the number of women who chose not to have children, rise in the number of employed women, divorcee and one-parent families.

By 1980s, notion of sex-specific role and family has evolved. Feminists no longer needed to reject "women's role". It became easier for women to handle both work and child-rearing. People now think of family and work in a different way. Women's movements based on symbiosis with motherhood are playing leading role in advancing social change in the post-industrial society.

3) *"The Special Quality of 'Motherhood' in Japan: Motherhood as a Keyword for Understanding Social Changes and Family Problems in Japan"*

Ms. Masami Ohinata, Associate Professor,  
Keisen Jogakuen College (Japan)

Japanese people share a common understanding of motherhood as an innate ability of women. This ambiguous definition of motherhood includes concept that mothers are born with instinctive love for their children. The society, on the other hand, sees motherhood as something which is noble and inviolable.

Japanese mother exists beyond the relations enjoyed between real mother and child. She is a symbol laden with symbolic value. This concept of motherhood helped establish the social significance of childrearing and as a result, assure women place in society as representation of motherhood. At the same time the society rejected full participation of women in society.



*Enthusiastic participation from the floor marked each session*

The jealously guarded mother-child relations robbed children of vital contacts with other persons. Moreover, this dangerously closed mother-child relationship prevented the society from building and providing child-care facilities and function. To right these adversities, women should liberate themselves from a conformist concept of womanhood.

4) *"Will Chinese Women Return Home?"*

Ms. Emiko Ochiai, Senior Lecturer, Doshisha  
Women's College of Liberal Arts (Japan)

Under the new open-door policy adopted in China a much



debated issue was that women should return home. The debate was spurred by the government policy which aimed at improving productivity by reducing surplus labour. Many Chinese women do not want to stay home and be simply housewives.

Historical circumstances had propelled Chinese women to join the workforce before they had time to ask themselves, "who am I?" or "what does it mean to be a woman?". In other words, they appear to have little experience in conceptualization of women's problems as they seem to be preoccupied with everyday work. It is an interesting question whether emergence of "modern family" is a necessary part of the process of modernization regardless of socialist or capitalist society.

### (3) Session II: WORK

The session focused on women's work in the formal sector and examined female workforce in Japanese and U.S. service economies and development policy and female labour in Asian countries.

#### 1) "The Impact of Micro-electronics Technological Innovation on Working Women -- Its Merits and Demerits"

Ms. Emiko Shibayama, Researcher on female labour problems (Japan)

Miraculous innovation in micro-electronics technology brought increasing number of women, notably part-time workers and highly educated women, into the workforce.

This is creating new types of discrimination against women in their working environment and conditions such as creating jobs with wage differentials, longer working hours, increased amount of work, technostress and maternal disorders. Structural reorganization of work is under way in various ways: concentration of working women in small enterprises, wider differentials in working conditions, diversified and unstable employment, irregular work hours and decline in rate of unionization.

If these disadvantages are to be turned into advantages, women must consciously and selectively pursue their objectives and participate in social decision making.

#### 2) "Development Policy and Women's Labour in Asian Countries"

Ms. Michiko Hiroki, General-Secretary, Asian Women Workers' Centre (Japan)

From about the end of the 1960s, countries in Asia began to shift their development policy from import substitution to export-oriented strategy of industrialization. Free trade zones were established for the benefit of multilateral companies. In 1972 Japanese companies began to make full scale overseas investments. Female workers, who make up some 80 per cent of all workers in free trade zones, work under low conditions and their rights to organize are restricted.

Asian women workers who increased in number as a result of the development policies of governments and emergence of transnational corporations found themselves incorporated in corporate global strategies. This meant that sex-role became a globally entrenched pattern of work creating north-south problem among the ranks of women. On the other hand, women quickly formed groups to address women's labour problems which in due time evolved into a global network.

National women workers' organizations were established in Korea and the Philippines. Asian women are fighting and appealing for solidarity under difficult circumstances.

#### 3) "Women in the U.S. Service Economy: Economic Autonomy or Low Wage Work?"

Ms. Heidi Hartmann, Director, Institute for Women's Policy Research (U.S.A.)

The number of working women has increased in the past several decades and working for wages is now the experience of the majority of women. In recent years mothers of young children have entered and remained in the labour market in



Participants on their way to the Conference Hall

record numbers. As a result no dip is observed in labour force participation of women even during the peak childbearing years for women which is usually in their twenties.

Several reasons may be cited for this dramatic change: a shift to service economy, availability of women with education and skills, declining real wages for men, increase in the number of households headed by women and spread of women's movement and women's desire to lead an independent way of life. American women want economic independence and are willing to assume the same economic responsibility as their male counterparts.

Shift to service economy benefited women even during the period of low economic growth. The U.S. is expected to face economic uncertainty, stagnation and demographic changes in labour force around the year 2000. Even then, the working women is projected to increase. Public policy and labour union strategies must deal with these changes. Women should play an active role in the process.

### (4) Session III: SEXUALITY

The session examined the image of women in media and status of women in sex industry with slide presentation. Discussion focused on effective ways of sending message including the use of humour and wit.

#### 1) "Re-defining Women's Image in the Media"

Ms. Ann Simonton, Director, Media Watch (U.S.A.)

In order to successfully redefine women's image in the media, there is a need to change basic attitudes about women. Perception of reality and power must be tackled. The process is based on the politics of Eros. Eros represents self-love and respect for one's own body, personality, intelligence, energy and life.

The world's media industry is controlled by a handful of multinational corporations. This centralized control has become clearly incompatible with freedom of information. Women are under-represented in the male-dominated media industry.

#### 2) "Depictions of Sexuality in Japanese Girls' Comic Books"

Ms. Chieko Nishiyama, Research Assistant,



Institute for Women's Studies,  
Ochanomizu University (Japan)

Girls' comic books in Japan have several notable characteristics: a) comic books that have young girls as heroines depict them free from the conventional sex role identity. We find, however, a persistent supportive male character in the background; b) comics that depict male homosexuality allow female readers to take a third party perspective.

These comics, however, do not suggest any human relationships that can direct changes in sex-roles. A common factor running through in both of these two types is the denial of femininity. Comic books illustrate the difficulty girls face in forming their own sex identity in a society pregnant with sex discrimination.

3) *"Filipino Women in Japan's Sex Industry"*

Ms. Liza Go (Filipina), Project Coordinator of  
Migrant Women's Programme Resource Center  
for Philippine Concerns (Japan)

The number of Filipino women coming to work in Japan has increased in the 1980s. Many work in the sex industry as "Japayuki-san". Because of the abnormal hours and circumstances of their employment, they have become invisible and faceless existence within the Japanese society.

Japanese men, dehumanized by ruthless ways of doing business seek momentary pleasure and relaxation in sexual activities. Most women silently acknowledge this. Women's liberation must essentially involve eradication of conditions that breed prostitution and enslavement of women. Women's liberation cannot be attained at the sacrifice of the women in developing world.

4) *"Pornographic Culture and Sexual Violence"*

Ms. Kuniko Funabashi,  
Researcher on Women's Studies (Japan)

Pornographic culture is the product of male-dominated society which has viewed women as an object of desire and control. It is a reflection of the society that oppresses women. Pornographic culture has been bred by a combination of discrimination against women and economic imperatives. It has been spawned by overabundance of information and buttressed by stereotype of a male/female relations--"the corporate soldier and the wife behind the battlelines"--that negate the claim of an individual.

It has gained citizenship because of the lack of loving relations between married couples and deterioration of communication in an age which we proudly call the high-technology information age. In a society that condones this, woman's role has been reduced to one of either motherhood or prostitution.

If new culture is to be created in place of pornography, we must expose cultivated lies about women. And we must adamantly refuse to patronize it and create shelters for women who need them. We must build network among women.

**(5) Session IV: EDUCATION**

In this session the present status, its impact and future issues of women's studies was discussed focusing on its place in higher education.

1) *"The Development of Women's Studies in Korea and Its Impact on Korean Society"*

Ms. Pilwha Chang, Assistant Professor,  
Ewha Women's University (Korea)

Ewha Women's University took the lead in establishing women's studies in Korea. First lectures on women's studies started at the undergraduate level in 1977. The lectures were popular among students and women's studies was initiated at the graduate level in 1982.

Today many male students attend lectures on women's studies. The future tasks will be to examine the differences not just between male and female but among different groups of women.

2) *"Feminist Studies in International Education; The Experience of the Women and Development Programme at the Institute of Social Studies, the Netherlands"*

Ms. Thanh-Dam Truong, Senior Lecturer,  
Institute of Social Studies (The Netherlands)

The Women and Development Programme was established at the request of women in developing countries at the time of the second wave of feminist movement and the International Year of Women. The Programme conducts research and education to identify, analyze and solve problems faced by women in the third world countries with a view to liberating them as human being.

The Programme has four goals: a) maintain links with women's movement; b) understand the mechanism that generates discrimination and work out strategies to change power relations; c) identify and analyze discrimination in specific historical and socio-economic context of particular society; and that it should be d) interdisciplinary.

Courses are designed to benefit from the diverse background and experience of the participants through encouraging critical exchange and feedback. Field interview and surveys are seized to build networks and efforts are made to synthesize theory and practice. The task in the future is to establish an alternative paradigm to replace the male-dominated and Euro-centric theories of social science.

3) *"The Impact of Women's Studies on Education in Japan"*

Ms. Teruko Inoue, Professor,  
Wako University (Japan)

Most women's courses at Japanese universities hinge on unilateral lecture format. Students who have taken women's studies courses remark that they were helpful in directing attention to the existence of discrimination based on sex. Other students who took such course grudgingly while at university have rediscovered it after graduation either at home or at work. Results of women's studies courses should be evaluated on a long-term basis.

Tasks for the future should include: a) annotating and compiling achievements of women's studies (preparing programmes and texts, and exchanging teaching experiences); b) reviewing studies and curricula from women's point of view (organization of women's studies and related fields of study); and c) providing follow-up to women's studies education and linkage with social education.

**III. Conclusion and tasks for future**

It was confirmed that problems facing women are shared around the world, i.e., control of women through controlling motherhood and reproductive technology, new problems that rise in women's work from shift to service economy, image of women in media, sex industry and women and common problems concerning women's studies.

It was suggested that in order to change the fixed sex roles and eliminate discrimination, new relationship between man and woman must be developed and a new society free of hierarchy and based on equality must be constructed. Women's



creativity must be mobilized for social change and solidarity among women should be strengthened to fight against capitalist-inspired reorganization of sex roles and bias against women in division of labor. Every opportunity must be seized to promote change of attitude by teaching women's studies. The way women is treated in the media and exploited in reproductive technology must be exposed. All in all women must act to overcome and change the tide of discrimination.

The discussion and tasks at the International Seminar for Women's Studies may be summarized in the following four points:

1) Bridging theory and practice: In the past lectures on women's studies efforts have been made to bridge theory and practice by involving researchers in programme planning and using their research and reports on specific actions taken. This approach was adopted for the seminar.

In sessions on sexuality and education, researchers exchanged their research findings suggesting specific approaches that may be taken to change attitudes of women and society.

2) Link between higher education and social education: The need for establishing department of women's studies at institutions of higher learning and the kind of content of courses and operational methods were also discussed. Women's studies in social education remains to be discussed in future seminars.

The seminar recognized the importance of collaborating with institutions of higher learning to promote women's studies and to place women's studies at the core of women's education. It was encouraging that about 35 per cent of participants were teaching staffs and 25.2 per cent were civil servants. Active exchange of views on teaching experience was most positive.

3) The seminar was stimulating in advancing theories on women's studies. In-depth discussion was held on women's labour in the post-industrial society, direction of women's liberation and theories on feminism.

4) The seminar benefited greatly from the participation of women from developing countries who offered insight on women's issues from global perspectives. Impact of reproductive technology on women in developing and industrialized countries and Filipino women in sex industry were some of the topics highlighted.

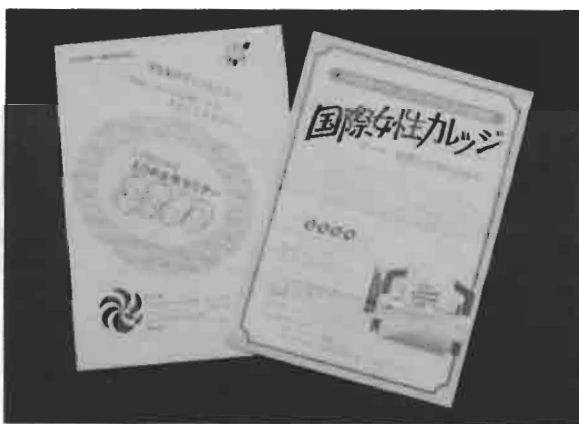
The issue of women's labour in the framework of development policy and multinational corporations was also discussed. It was agreed that women's studies in Japan will need to incorporate perspective from developing countries.

It should be noted that women's studies in Japan has entered its second phase following the International Seminar.

(Chikako Uemura, Programme specialist, NWEC)

## JAPANESE WOMEN TODAY

### PROMOTION OF LIFELONG LEARNING



Posters of Women's Lifelong College

An increasing number of women are participating in social activities and enjoying it. More female students receive higher education and increasing number of women join the workforce. This can be attributed to changes in the social environment including longer life expectancy, availability of information technology, internationalization and a shift to service economy.

According to the Opinion Survey on Lifelong Learning released in 1988 by the Prime Minister's Office, majority of

the respondents said that enrollment in universities and lectures at universities should be opened to adult population. They expect universities and other institutions of higher education to play active role as providers of lifelong learning and education.

Exciting programmes are being suggested to encourage lifelong learning among women. In 1987, the Head-quarters for the Planning and Promoting of Policies Relating to Women drafted the New National Plan of Action towards the 21st century. One of the priority policies in the Plan is to offer a wide range of alternatives for lifelong learning. The Plan suggests providing learning opportunities for women designed for each phase of their lives.

Since April 1989, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture has been supporting "Women's Lifelong College -- programmes for promoting women's lifelong learning" jointly with board of education in each prefecture and higher educational institutions. The College is designed to meet the ever diversifying and specialized needs of women for lifelong learning.

The programme supports women in career building, sports, political and community and other social activities by providing place of learning advanced and specialized skills and knowledge. The programme also encourages women to keep up their studies and to put them to effective use.

This model programme is characterized by collaboration between society and academic institution. Schools provide classroom, library, language facilities and professional teaching



staff. These are strategically combined with experience and expertise accumulated in the field of social education with particular emphasis to the needs of women.

The budget for thirty lectures has been appropriated in fiscal 1989. The amount constitutes a significant portion of the overall budget set aside for women's education. These programmes operated by prefectural board of education will be financed in part by the national government.

The composition of the programme is outlined below:

1) College planning and steering committee

The committee, to be made up of about ten people from colleges and women's organizations will be responsible for setting curriculum and preparing teaching materials.

2) Establishment of college

The college will offer courses reflecting the needs of each region. The courses include women's studies, inter-national understanding, household management and lifelong learning. An average of thirty lecture hours will be given in a year on

once-a-week basis. The courses will offer seats to fifty to one hundred participants.

They will be offered in cooperation with public and private universities and junior colleges.

3) Certificate will be awarded to those who complete courses. Their names will be registered as leaders of community activities.

In 1989, there were twenty-four courses given in twenty-two prefectures and cities. Community leaders, working women and women with older or even young children took and enjoyed specialized courses provided to them on college campuses.

It is hoped that women intellectually stimulated and "refreshed" will become agents for local community leadership.

(Women's Education Division,  
Life-long Learning Bureau,  
Minister of Education, Science and Culture)

## HOME ECONOMICS FOR ALL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS, MALE AND FEMALE

Advances in science and economic development have produced affluent society. Today's society is also an aging, international and information-oriented society. To meet these changes, school education is in the process of transformation. A new curriculum which includes some revisions, was announced in March 1989 after examination by the education council.

The revision requires all students to take home economics which was in the past reserved exclusively for female students. Home economics as an academic subject has been revised several times since its introduction after the Second World War. So far home economics was designed primarily to teach girls skills of home management.

The revision of 1989 requires both male and female students to take home economics for the following reasons.

First of all all students, regardless of sex should be provided knowledge and skill necessary for everyday living. They should be taught that both husband and wife must help

each other to be good partners in life and to become good parents.

Japan ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1985. In accordance with the spirit of the Convention, home economics which was hitherto reserved only for girl students was to be opened to boys as well. The direction of the change was indicated by the "Study Meeting on Domestic Science". The Education Curriculum Council studied the proposal from the point of view of offering the same curriculum to male and female students.

Accordingly, home economic courses were revised to meet the needs of the changing society. They are designed to help students become good parents and improve their family life through learning practical skills. The courses now include new subjects such as "living skills" and "living in general" in addition to the "home management". All students must take one out of these three courses.

**Note:** There were three requirements concerning Japan's ratification of the Convention: 1) *revision of the Japanese Nationality Act based on patriarchal family*; 2) *realization of equal treatment at work* and 3) *provision of education under the same conditions to male and female students*. The Japanese Nationality Act was revised in 1984 to recognise both matriarchal and patriarchal families. The Equal Employment Opportunity Law was enacted in 1986 to ensure equal treatment at work. This text describes the steps taken to meet the third requirement.

## WOMEN'S GROUPS IN JAPAN

The Women's Group section is written by representatives of the group introduced.

### FEDERATION OF JAPANESE WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS

The Federation of Japanese Women's Organizations was established on



Women's Activities for "Peace Wave" Action II in 1988

April 5, 1953 by Japanese women aspiring for peace. Raicho Hiratsuka, known as the pioneer of women's movement in Japan, became its first president.

In the following year, the United States of America conducted a hydrogen bomb test in the Bikini atolls. Crew of a Japanese fishing boat operating nearby suffered exposure from the radioactive fallout. The Federation of Japanese Women's Organizations sent an appeal to the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF), calling for the support of women around the world to ban nuclear weapons.

The "Appeal from Women in Japan", describing the details of the victims of the radioactive fallout was sent worldwide and created a sensation. The Appeal prompted women in the world to initiate the World Mothers Congress. Since then the Japanese Mothers Congress has met every year. The Federation affiliated to the WIDF in 1957 and has since been working for world peace in cooperation with international women's movements.

During the height of the Viet-nam War, the Federation of Japanese Women's Organizations conducted a 100,

000,000 yen fund-raising campaign to help mothers and children in Vietnam. The campaign contributed to the establishment of the Hanoi Friendship Hospital.

There are some 50,000 nuclear arms in the world. Man will destroy himself in case of a nuclear war. As women of Japan, the world's only country on which the atomic bomb was dropped, we are committed to abolishing nuclear arms from the face of the earth. The Federation is collecting signatures for the "Hiroshima-Nagasaki Appeal" which calls for a ban on all nuclear arms.

The target is to collect one billion signatures from around the world. The Federation has also organized three campaigns called the "peace wave" jointly with women's organizations in Japan and elsewhere.

The Federation of Japanese Women's Organizations is working for equal rights and improvement of women's status in society. To this end, the Federation has released a proposal to realize the United Nations' goal of "equality, development and peace" in Japan. With regard to the New National Plan of Action it has submitted a request

to the government.

At present the Federation has 500,000 members affiliated to women's organizations, labour unions and women's departments of citizens' groups. These organizations have their own programmes but launch joint action on matters of mutual concern such as opposing the recent introduction of consumption tax and to tendencies toward militaristic education.

The current president is Fuki Kushida, (Vice chairman of WIDF). The Federation publishes monthly journal, Fujin Tsushin (Women's communication) and an annual Fujin Hakusho (Whitepaper on women) and Fujin Techo (Women's memo) (The publications are all written in Japanese.)

For further inquiries please contact:

303, 4-11-9, Sendagaya,  
Shibuya-ku, Tokyo 151  
Federation of Japanese  
Women's Organizations  
(Nihon Fujin Dantai Rengo-kai)  
tel: 03-401-6147  
fax: 03-5474-5585

## JAPANESE MOTHERS CONGRESS

As illustrated earlier, the establishment of the Japanese Mothers Congress is closely related to the appeal the Federation of Japanese Women's Organizations has made to WIDF in 1954. The Appeal prompted women in the world to initiate the World Mothers Congress.

The World Mothers Congress was held in July 1955 in Lausanne, Switzerland. Some 1,060 mothers from around the world took part in the Congress. In preparation for it, mothers in Japan organized Japanese Mothers Congress which met for the first time from June 7-9 to elect representatives among other business. Some two thousand mothers participated in the Congress which came to be known as the "congress of appeal with tears".

Japan was represented by sixteen ordinary women some of whom were mothers who had lost their children during the war, A-bomb victims and day labourers. Upon their return from the World Congress they organised two thousand meetings to report on their experience.

In due course these meetings became the catalyst for formation of mothers congress throughout Japan. At



Street demonstration during Japanese Mothers Congress in 1989

the same time the Japanese Mothers Congress became an annual event. The 36th Congress will be held in July 1990 in Chiba Prefecture.

"Mothers who give birth to life desire to bring up and protect it" (a verse from the poem dedicated to the World Mothers Congress) became the slogan of the congresses held in work places, local communities, cities and prefectures. The central theme of the mothers congress is the abolition of nuclear arms.

The congress also addresses a wide range of issues from garbage management to national security articulating and putting into action women's diverse demands. Mothers fought against polio, encouraged children to complete high

school, improved school milk, and campaigned against price hikes (10,000,000 signatures) and for peace (5,000,000 signatures).

Grass roots activities are incorporated in the annual Japanese Mothers Congress. At present the central executive committee is made up of 88 organizations and all decisions are made on the principle of unanimous agreement.

For further inquiries please contact:

2-6-2, Hitotsubashi,  
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 101  
c/o Nihon Kyoiku Kaikan Bld.,  
Japanese Mothers Congress  
(Nihon Hahaoya Taikai Renrakukai)  
tel: 03-230-1836~7  
fax: 03-230-1837



# FEMALE LABOUR FOLLOWING THE ENACTMENT OF EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY LAW

Eiko Shinotsuka, Associate Professor, Ochanomizu University

## 1 Background

In April 1986, the Equal Employment Opportunity Law came into being in Japan. In the United States, comprehensive laws prohibiting discrimination, the Equal Pay Act (1963) and Article 7 of the Civil Rights Act (1964), were formulated some twenty years ago ahead of many industrialized countries. The bill for the Equal Employment Opportunity Law in Japan was originally modeled after the law in the U.S., but when finally enacted, the law was less drastic than initially designed.

Employers opposed the enactment on the grounds that the success of the Japanese economy in the post war period had depended on the Japanese type of employment pattern which consisted of male-centered employment pattern based on lifetime employment, seniority-based wages and company-wide unions. They claimed that they needed time before the concept of equal opportunity in employment was broadly accepted.

On the other hand, female workers also opposed the law because it will mean deterioration of their working conditions. The Labour Standards Law formulated in Japan after the second world war (1947) under the guidance of General Headquarters (GHQ) stipulated minimum working conditions and made provisions to protect female workers.

Lawmakers felt that it was premature to expect women to work under equal conditions alongside men and gave protection to help women who were generally forced to work under harsh conditions during the pre-war period. The provisions barred women from overtime, night work and work on days off. Women were also accorded monthly leave during menstrual period under the law.

Women were concerned, therefore, that if the Equal Employment Opportunity Law were to be introduced, it would conflict with the protective provisions in the Labour Standards Law and would take away their privileges (gains) and worsen working conditions.

Finally, the Law was enacted ushering in a new era of equal employment opportunities. It was left that protective provisions would be accordingly revised.

## 2 Equal Employment Opportunity Law

The Equal Employment Opportunity Law of Japan is targeted primarily on employers. The basic spirit of the Law is that employers should not discriminate against female workers to male when hiring them. Lawmakers, however, were not able to incorporate clauses that prohibit discrimination in all areas due to strong opposition from employers as noted earlier.

The Law basically mandates employers to exercise best effort not to discriminate against female workers in recruitment, hiring, job assignment and promotion. On the other hand, it prohibits employers from discriminatory treatment in areas of training, welfare, retirement and lay-offs. It must be noted that while these "prohibition clauses" entail no penalties, it is considered that employers have learned the hard way through losing legal cases in the past and taken "equality" in these fields as granted.

Some of the protective provisions were revised including limits on overtime (for example, 2 hours a day in the old law), night-work and work on days off. It is, however, not practical to apply the rule across the board as majority of working women today are unskilled and not highly educated.

Accordingly for the time being there are two levels of application. Women in managerial jobs or limited clerical jobs are treated in the same way as male workers. All other female workers enjoy protective provisions with a very few changes.

## 3 Impact of the Law on Female Workers

After four years since the enactment of the Equal Employment Opportunity Law, it is difficult to accurately assess or statistically analyze its impact on female labour. The Law is expected to have an impact on correcting wage differentials between the sexes.

Table 1 shows changes in average monthly wage of male and female workers. The wage differential diminished quickly during rapid economic growth (1960 to early 1970s). With a more reduced growth following the Oil Crisis, the gap widened. The wage differential seems to have narrowed again slightly after the Equal Employment Opportunity Law came into force. We can see this more clearly by comparing the starting wage of female workers according to the level of education.

Table 1 Average monthly wage differential between male and female workers

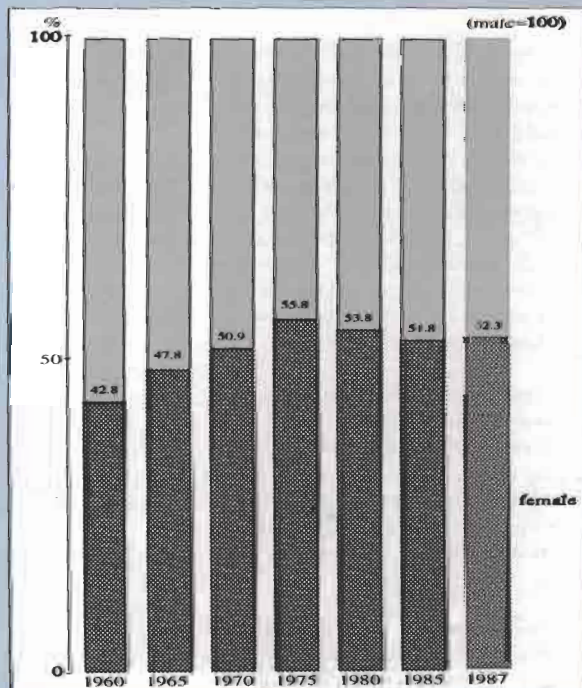




Table 2 indicates that after the enactment of the Law, female workers' starting salary (college and junior college graduates) has edged closer to that of male counterparts. The Law appears to have had little effect on junior high and high school graduates.

This shows that highly educated women have apparently benefited the most from the Law. This can be explained according to the measures taken by business corporations in recruiting female workers. That is to say, corporations offered two courses: those who will work the same as men and take on general job and those who will be satisfied doing odd jobs and

being assistants to male workers.

Employers reasoned that it will not be economically justifiable to treat women who are working only temporarily the same as men. Of the highly educated women only a fraction chose the first option - a course for elite. Most women are not attracted to men's style of work which means much overtime work and readiness to accept transfers.

In the four years since its existence, the Law has become established among Japanese corporations.

**Table 2 Differential in starting pay between male and female college graduates and differential by educational level(1987)**

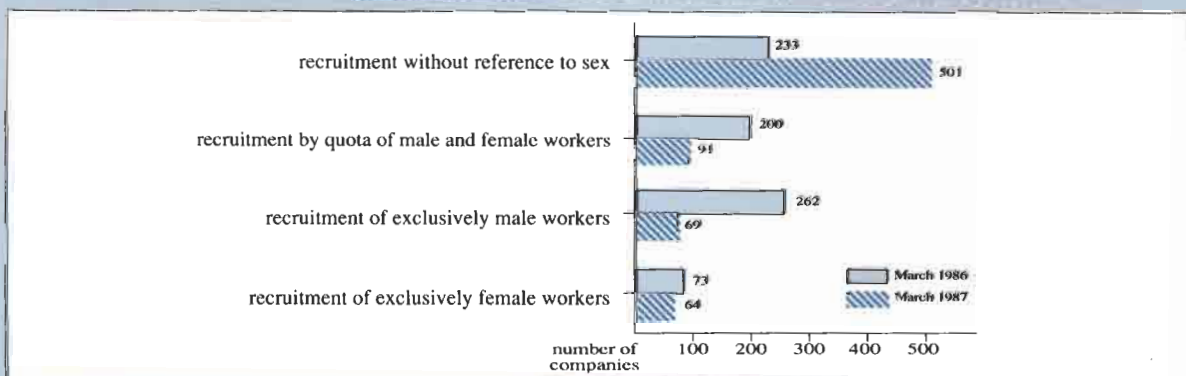
| sex    | education          | differential between sexes<br>(male = 100) |      |      |      | differential according to education<br>(high school leavers = 100) |       |       |       |
|--------|--------------------|--|------|------|------|--|-------|-------|-------|
|        |                    | 1976                                       | 1980 | 1985 | 1988 | 1976   | 1980  | 1985  | 1988  |
| female | junior high school | 90.9                                       | 90.3 | 95.3 | 94.3 | 80.1   | 82.9  | 86.3  | 86.9  |
|        | high school        | 95.4                                       | 95.2 | 94.7 | 94.6 | 100  | 100   | 100   | 100   |
|        | junior college     | 98.5                                       | 96.7 | 94.7 | 95.1 | 110.4  | 110.3 | 110.2 | 110.5 |
|        | college            |  |      |      | 97.3 |  |       |       | 130.9 |
|        | clerical job       | 92.9                                       | 94.9 | 96.1 | 97.5 | 119.3  | 123.1 | 125.7 | 130.6 |
|        | technical job      |  |      |      | 97.6 |  |       |       | 132.2 |
| male   | junior high school | 100  | 100  | 100  | 100  | 84.1   | 87.4  | 85.7  | 87.2  |
|        | high school        | 100  | 100  | 100  | 100  | 100  | 100   | 100   | 100   |
|        | junior college     | 100  | 100  | 100  | 100  | 106.9  | 108.5 | 110.2 | 110.0 |
|        | college            |  |      |      | 100  |  | 123.4 | 124.8 | 127.3 |
|        | clerical job       | 100  | 100  | 100  | 100  | 122.5  | 123.3 | 123.8 | 126.7 |
|        | technical job      |  |      |      | 100  | 122.6  | 123.7 | 126.3 | 128.1 |

Table 3 shows changes in the condition of recruitment in two years after enactment. In the past many Japanese corporations advertised exclusively for male recruits. Today increasing number of companies recruit without specifying sex in response to the demand for equality.

Women's labour participation in Japan continue to show an

M-shaped curve falling at child-bearing age even with these changes. The bottom in M-shaped curve, however, is less pronounced than in the past indicating that more women consider job as a career rather than temporary pastime before marrying. In the future the impact of the Equal Employment Opportunity Law is expected to expand to all women workers and not merely the highly-educated.

**Table 3 Recruitment by sex (number of companies) before and after the Equal Employment Opportunity Law**





## SURVEY REPORT

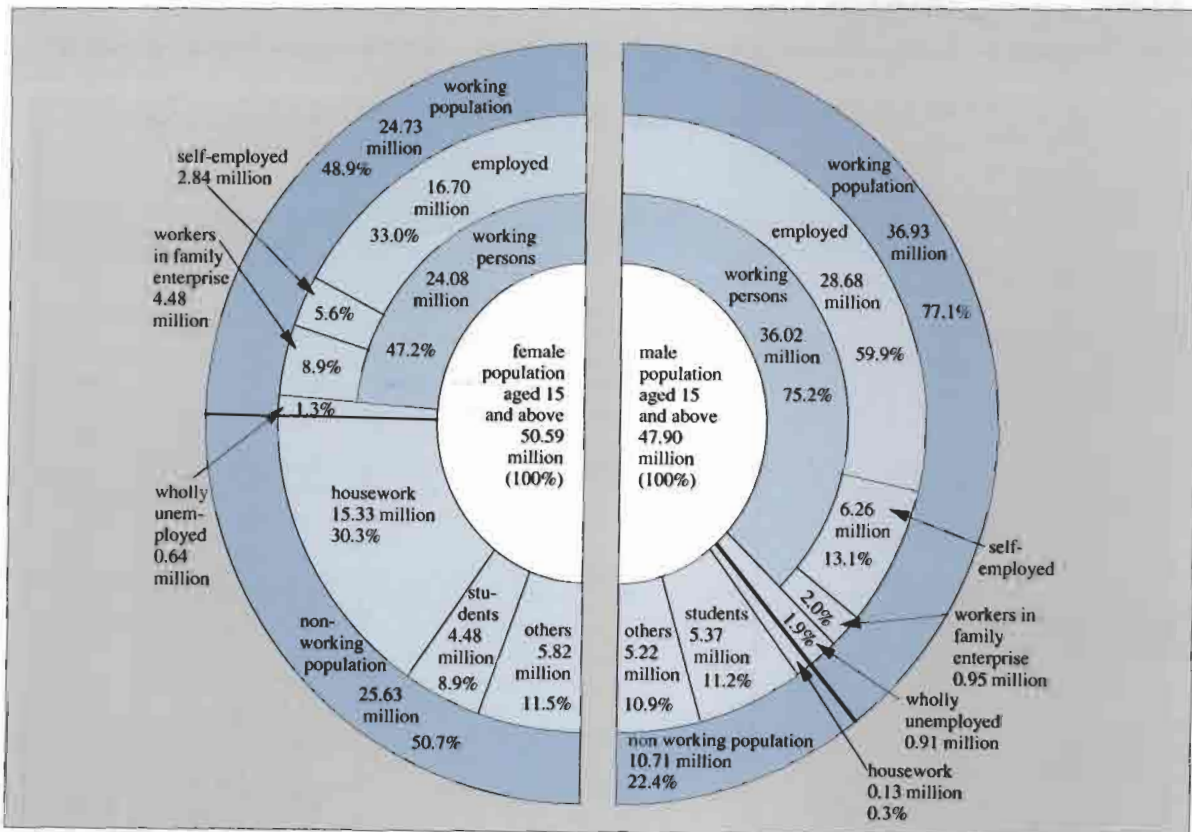
The "Women's Education Study Group" was established by National Women's Education Centre in fiscal 1986. The Group selects basic data on women from various statistics and through its analysis, studies the change in the awareness and social conditions of women in Japan. Each year it also publishes "Status of women as seen in Statistics".

This report introduces *statistical survey on women's labour in Japan*.

### (a) Working Population

Working population is defined as the number of persons aged 15 and above capable of work minus those currently not working due to old age, schooling or housework and persons who have not actively looked for employment.

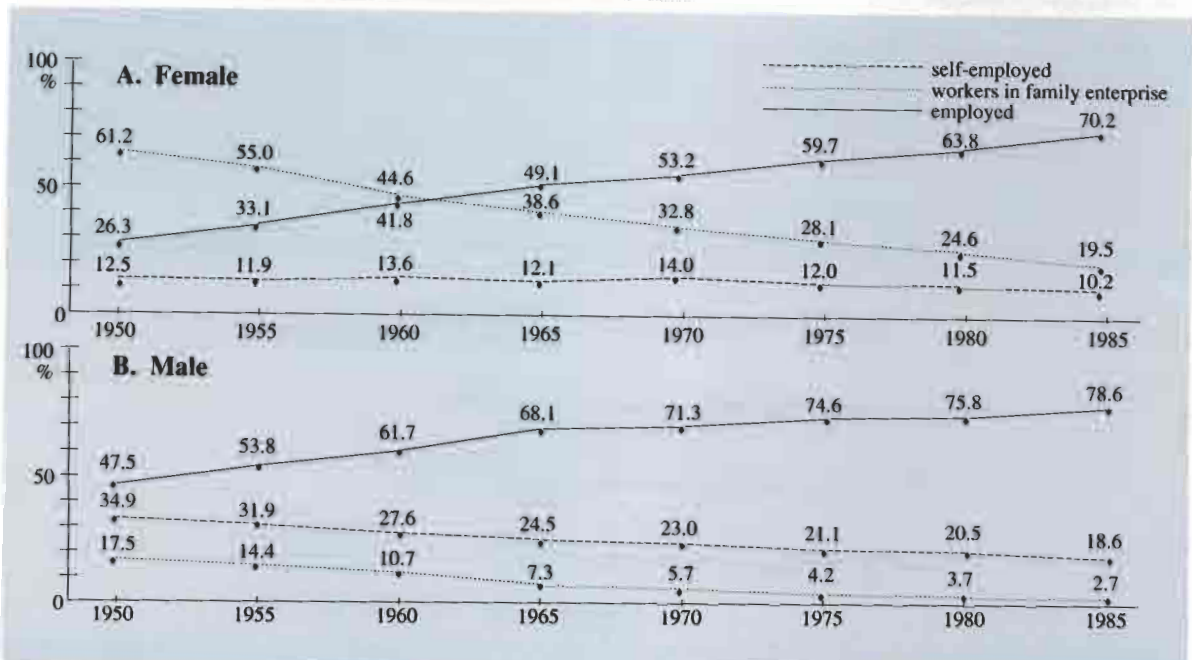
Labour force participation rate is defined as the proportion of working population to population of persons aged 15 and above. In 1988 the female labour force participation rate was 48.9 per cent and that of male, 77.1 per cent.



### (b) Ratio of workers by sex and status of work

For both female and male, employed workers have

increased while workers in family enterprise have recorded a decline.

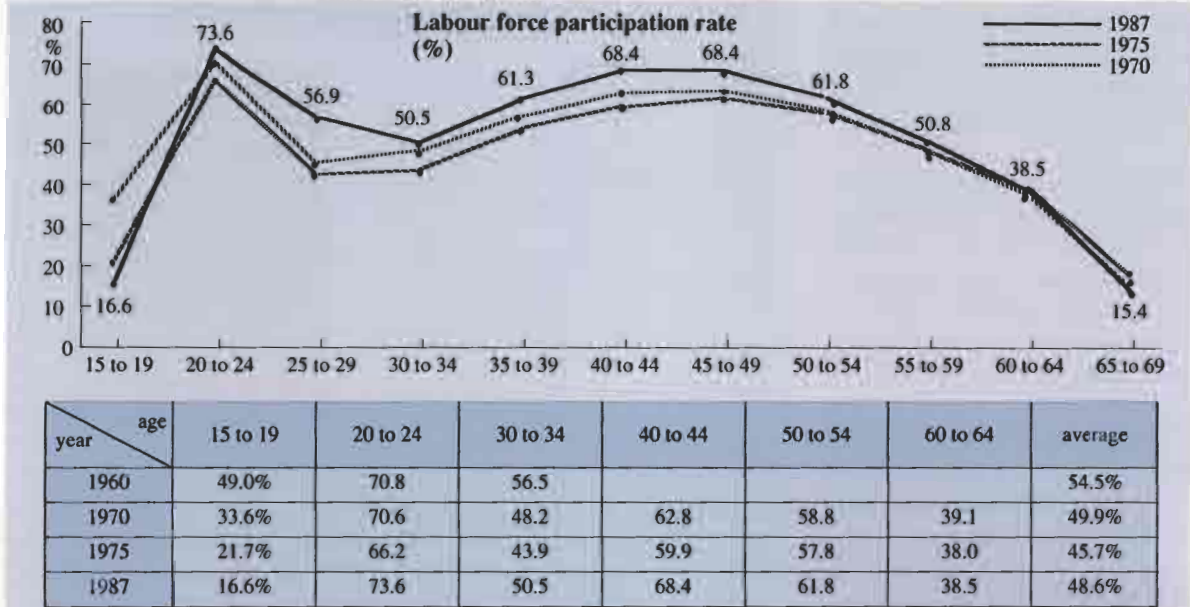




**(c) Female labour force participation rate by age group**

The female labour force participation rate draws a M-shaped curve peaking in the 20 to 24 and 40 to 49 age brackets and hitting bottom in 25 to 34 age bracket. Since 1975, however, the bottom has been climbing steadily. The female

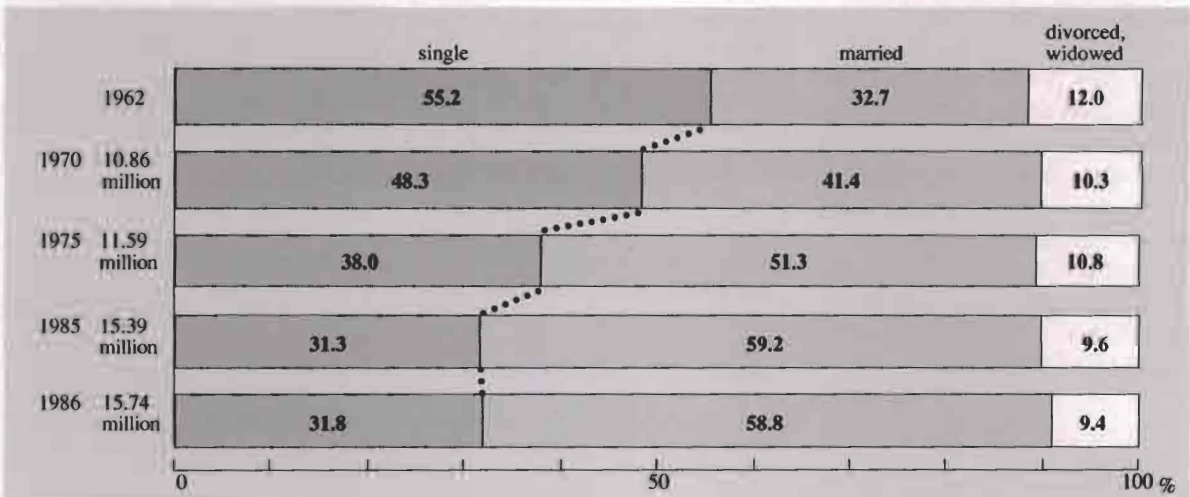
labour force participation rate recorded a high average of 54.5 per cent around 1960 when many women took part in farming and other primary industries. The rate had fallen thereafter but has been steadily recovering since 1975 if only very modestly.



**(d) Ratio of single and married female workers (non-agro sector)**

The rise in female labour participation rate in recent years has been propelled by an increase in the number of middle

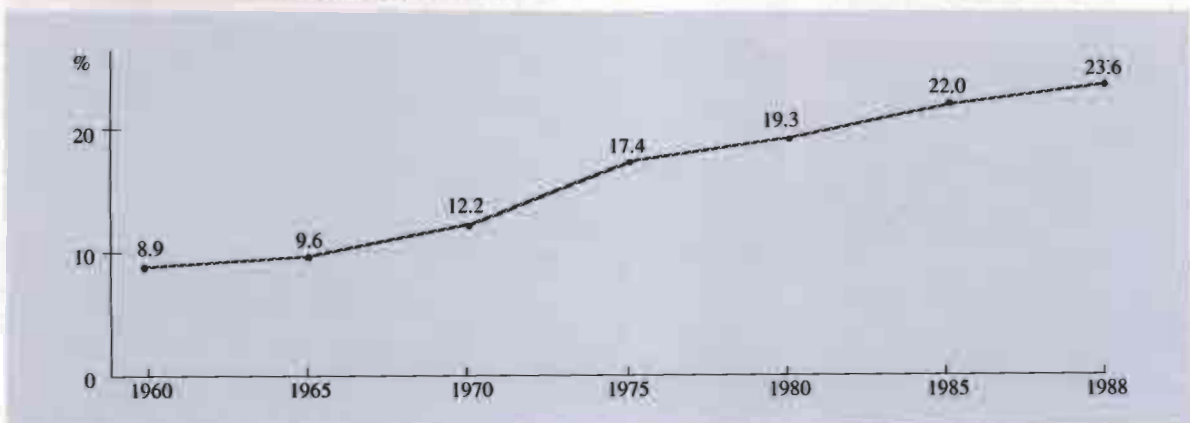
aged, married women joining the workforce. In 1986, married women, divorced or widowed women accounted for 68.2 per cent of all female workers, up from 44.7 per cent in 1962. The ratio exceeded 50 per cent in 1970.



**(e) Ratio of part-time female workers**

In 1960 part-timers made up 8.9 per cent of the total

female workers. The ratio increased steadily to 23.6 per cent in 1988.





## INTRODUCING NWEC

The National Women's Education Centre was founded in 1977 by Japan's Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. The Centre's activities include:

**Training** for women in the form of seminars, lectures, group discussions, individual study projects, and other educational programmes. The Centre's comprehensive training facilities are available to any group whose subject matter relates to women's education.

**Exchange** of information among women's education leaders from Japan and overseas, as well as others who are interested in women's issues.

**Information** gathered and disseminated by NWEC's extensive libraries of printed and audio / visual materials.

**Research** of issues touching on women's and family education.

Apart from NWEC-sponsored programmes, our facilities are available to women's groups and individuals for study programmes and cultural exchange free of charge (excluding meals and accommodation).

To use our facilities, please complete and submit a NWEC application form at least 10 days in advance but not six months before intended use.

### NWEC Newsletter

National Women's Education  
Centre

728 Sugaya, Ranzan-  
machi,  
Hiki-gun, Saitama 355-02  
Japan

Tel : 0493-62-6711

Fax : 0493-62-6721

Cable : NWEC HIGASHI-  
MATSUYAMA

## PUBLICATION

### FOREIGN-LANGUAGE OFFERING ON JAPANESE WOMEN

#### JAPANESE WOMEN TODAY

(Prime Minister's Office, Japan 1-6-1, Nagata-cho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100. February 1990, 56 pages. In English. This publication is not on sale. Any inquiries on it are requested to be made to the above address.)

The socio-economic changes and development in the past thirty years, the lengthening of the average life span, a declining birth rate, and rising educational levels have brought with them remarkable changes in Japanese women's life style.

With the increase in the number of women in employment or otherwise active in society outside the home, women are now playing an increasingly important role in the economy and in society.

In parallel with these new trends, there has been a wide-spread call for measures to make full use of women's abilities in society especially since International Women's Year. The efforts to meet such needs have been increased in the National Diet, the Ministries and Agencies and private organizations.

The Japanese Women Today, prepared by the Office for Women's Affairs of the Prime Minister's office in collaboration with other Ministries and Agencies, aims at introducing to the international community the present status of Japanese women and the government's policies regarding women.

This report consists of three parts, covering various aspects of women's



issues in Japan such as (1) the current status of women (population and life cycle, family life, women's attitudes and daily activities, school and social education, the current situation of female workers and employees, employment conditions, personnel management, part-time employees, employment situation for new graduates, structural changes in female employees, female workers in agriculture, forestry and fisheries), (2) policies related to women (improvement of the legal status of women during the United Nations Decade for Women, formulation and implementation of the New National Plan of Action) etc., (3) questions and answers concerning women's issues in Japan.

The Japanese Women Today including the latest statistics, provides updated information on the status of Japanese women to those who study women's issues in Japan as well as to those who are concerned with enhancing the status of women or promoting an international understanding of women's issues.

## FOREIGN VISITORS TO NWEC

As of 31 March 1990, the NWEC received 7,066 visitors from 122 countries. Followings are some of the recent visitors of the Centre.

16-17 November 1989 : A goodwill mission of 18 Afro-American women, touring Japan at the invitation of the Japanese African-American Society, USA.

11 December : Ms. Arvonne S. Fraser, Director of the International Women's Rights Action Watch, USA.

16 February 1990 : Ms. Tunakaimanu Fielakepa, Senior Educational Officer of the Ministry of Education, Tonga.

26 February : Ms. Sei-Wha Chung, Professor of the Ewha Women's University, Korea.

28 March : Dr. Bronwen Cohen, Director of the Scottish Child and Family Alliance: UK Expert Representative of the European Commission Children Network