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Information for UPR of Japan

Submitted by Japan Network on Education for the Advancement of Gender Equality

Human Rights Situation of Women and Children

1. Profile of Japan Network on Education for the Advancement of Gender Equality

The organization was established in 1997 to promote the issues discussed on Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. We are making actions through practice of education to promote gender equal society. The organization has members throughout the nation.

2. Concluding Observations on Japanese Government's Report 2003

Japanese Government ratified the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, but didn't ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention. Many women in Japan hope that the Government will do so soon. The Japanese Government has not yet submitted the Sixth State Report, although the due time is over. The Government has also not submitted the Third Report yet. We hope the Government will submit these two reports quickly and ratify the Optional Protocol. When the Government make the reports, it needs not only to hear what NGO say but also to change the ways to consult with NGO more sincerely.

3. The Revision of the Basic Act on Education

(1) State Intervention in Family Education

The Basic Act on Education was revised in December in 2006 against many people's opposition. The article which prescribes coeducation was eliminated, and the principal rule to implement gender equality was lost. Furthermore, family education was emphasized (Article 10,) which made it possible to force the idea about how the individual family should be and the gender distinct role in education. Japan has a history in which the state intervened in family matters and controlled people's ideas and opinions to make the people cooperate with war policies. We feel apprehensive about the government's campaigning for "family education."

(2) Interference with Promoting Coeducation and Gender Equal Education

Statistics of coeducation (Ministry of Education, 2005) show that 89.2 percent of the total educational institutions are coeducational, 3.0 percent are for men, and 7.5 percent are for women. The revised Act on Education does not specify the significance of gender equal education. About home-making subject in high and junior high school curriculum, the trend women and men learn separately is encouraged. In local government assemblies "backlash" attacks to gender equal

education and sex education are happening frequently. The word "gender" and the description of "comfort women" during the war disappear from school textbooks. The description of "diverse family" is also checked in textbooks.

(3) The Revision of Educational Guidelines Making Academic Competition Harder

The report of the Educational Council on revision of Educational Guidelines emphasized the promotion of "power to live" and "ability to apply," and the nationwide achievement test was introduced. The achievement test directly linked to children's evaluation, and evaluation of schools and teachers. Teachers are making desperate efforts to teach similar questions, similar tests after holidays, supplementary lessons after school, and cooperation with cramming schools. School curriculum is changed to make more lessons, and the system of academic competition is being strengthened. Children's stress is building up, and children are more likely to be mad at trifling things, to stay at school infirmary, to have less and less time to play. Bullying, suicides, and acts of violence are increasing. Children are bereaved of precious time of being children, and we can hear children's silent screams.

(4) The Result of Achievement Test Leads to School Gaps and Teachers' Exhaustion

The publication of the results of Achievement Test leads to school evaluation and teachers' evaluation. That makes school distrust. The result of Achievement Test also makes the difference in school budget by "voucher plan" making school gaps bigger. The harmful effect of Achievement Test is clear. Children are losing self affirmation and losing willingness to learn. Teachers are also in the system of competition, suffering from administrative control, long working hours, discriminatory wages, forced transfer, forced training and discouraging self learning. Many teachers are bereaved of creativity and autonomy and suffer from illness and depression. Teachers are often driven to suicides, and many of them make earlier retirement.

4. Women and Children Also Suffer from Poverty

The Government's policy of structural reform are making bigger income gap and poverty is spreading widely. Young people and women work in temporary and irregular jobs. The irregular workers account for 55.6 percent in women workers. Unstable jobs and low wages make families living difficult. Especially mother-and-child families are more likely to suffer from poverty, mothers working in several jobs at the same time barely supporting livelihood. In those families children are likely to lose stability in life and fall into unstable mental condition. So they cannot concentrate at learning. On the other hand, families which are in a better way financially make their children go to cramming schools and let them learn private lessons, and can choose schools without considering transportation expenses. Those situations make many children and young people lose confidence and self-respect. Establishing fair rules in working conditions and reforming labor laws are necessary.

5. Sex Education Bashing Saying "Going Too Far"

Bashing of sex education, saying "radical education," began in 2002 and brought the check system of submitting weekly plans and checking the teaching plan by principals and vice-principals. This threatens the autonomy and independency of teachers. Sex education is controlled by Educational Guidelines and is limited on the pretext of "developmental stage," ignoring children's interests and information they already have. Teaching materials are also limited.

High school students learn sex from friends, comics, magazines, TVs, teachers and Videotapes, in this order. In addition they learn from inter-net nowadays. 49 percent of the total high school students have seen adult videos. This kind of information affects children deeply. Questionnaire research shows that children want the accurate information about sex. In flooding sex information for men, more and more students and young people are infected with HIV/AIDS and other sexual diseases. They are also likely to get pregnant and get abortion. We should face the real situation and listen to what children really want. We should give the scientific information and that from the gender equal point of view. We should give sex education from the human rights point of view.

6. Backlash at Gender Equality

New Conservatism and Backlash power are operating petition campaign for reforming The Basic Law for a Gender-equal Society and abolishing Basic Plans for a Gender-equal Society. The lecture meeting prepared by the local government and civil society was cancelled because of violent actions and threat at Tsukuba City. People are protesting and demanding for the safe lecture meeting. At Matuyama City, "The Petition for Applying Regulations for Gender-equal Society," which specified not to encourage women study nor gender research, was adopted. At Matsuyama City, the books in which titles there are the words "gender free" were removed from public reading. To remove the books titled "gender free" may be against the constitution.

Conclusion

To resist these backlash, it is necessary to improve the contents of the Third Plan for Basic Law for a Gender-equal Society. To promote and realize gender-equal society is one of the most important policies in 21st century.

Educational practice for gender equal society is prevailing in school, where there are backlashes and competition systems. Educational practice should be carried out based on Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and on the Constitution. We also carry out educational practice wishing for children's free and lively growing up.

We sincerely wish that UN Human Rights Council should make careful and deliberate discussion on the human rights situation in Japan.