



NEWSLETTER

Japan International Labour Foundation

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Banke and Parsa Schools Open with High Expectations — NTUC/JILAF Non-Formal Education School Project in Nepal —

Welcomed by students with lively greeting, "Namaste, Sir!"

In order to provide opportunities for chil-



▲ Lesson at Kailali School

dren from poor families to receive an education, NTUC and JILAF have been engaged in a Non-Formal Education School Project in Nepal since 1996. Again this fiscal year, in September, 12 schools welcomed a total of 600 new pupils, and began a nine-month course. At the end of October, field manager Masao Wada, who lives in Nepal, and a member of JILAF visited schools at Parsa, Bara, Banke, and Kailali, on the Terai plain in South-West Nepal.

Grave Consequence of Maoist rebels

In Nepal, for the last year or longer, anti-government Maoist organizations have continued to threaten the livelihood of Nepal's citizens, by attacking government facilities in each region, and severing lines of transport and communication. During our visit, due to the Maoists' admonitions, "banda" (violent general strikes) had occurred in each area, few people ventured into towns, and most stores were closed accordingly. When we traveled by car from Nepalganj to the Kailali School, we underwent careful inspections by government troops and police at more than 10 checkpoints, and we were able to confirm the af-

tereffects of damage, such as bridges destroyed by Maoists and police stations that had been attacked.

Because of the Maoist problem which also has had a major effect on the non-formal schools, and particularly at the Kabre and Arghakhachi Schools, normal operation has become difficult. Consequently, this fiscal year, those two schools have been forced to remain closed, and new pupils were not recruited. In place of those schools, it was decided to run another two new schools at Nepalganj in Banke and Birganj in Parsa, where there has been a desire for such schools and safety concern is not so serious.

Active School Management

In order to make the Non-Formal Education School Project a success, it is important that three parties the person in charge of each school (normally the NTUC branch president in the relevant district), the coordinator, and the teacher cooperate with each other to nurture the pupils with enthusiasm from their respective standpoints. The persons in charge manifested leadership in the project and worked with their enthusiasm at both schools in Banke and Parsa which were newly opened, and it was evident that the schools were being run on the basis of ample preparation.

At the Banke School, based on the attitude of the person in charge that "JILAF provides 50% support," funds are also raised from union dues, earnings from social activities by the union, donations from local residents, and the like. In addition to activities conducted with JILAF support, the school holds sewing classes in order to raise incomes

of pupils' families even a little, and bears the cost for some 10 pupils' who exceeds the authorized number of 50 members. In the future, the school plans to provide subsidies for entry fees and course costs for school-leavers who go on to formal schools, and vocational training for elder children who do not go on to formal schools, as well as help in finding employment.

It is truly ideal for the projects to develop independently at the school level in such ways. JILAF, too, would like to encourage schools to stimulate each other and operate even better in the future.

Public school destination for school-leavers also visited

In Kailali, we visited the formal school to which pupils go after completing their course at non-formal school, and we had the opportunity to talk to school-leavers. We saw many of them studying at the public school, and recognized again the importance of the Non-Formal Education School Project.

On the other hand, it is hoped to provide the children who cannot go on to formal schools and those who find it difficult to continue at formal schools with opportunities for vocational training, and enable them to acquire the skills that link to employment. We would like to develop a new project together with NTUC.



▲ Formal school attended by school-leavers from non-formal schools

Women Union Leaders from Middle East and Asia Exchange Views across Borders

—Women's Trade Union Training Team, ICFTU/APRO, Jordan, Palestine, Philippines, Malaysia, Turkey—

From October 17-30, a Women's Trade Union Training Team was invited to Japan. In conjunction with the Rengo Central Women's Rally, for several years, this has been the only all-female team invited each year. It was originally an Asian women's team, with participants coming mainly from the Asia-Pacific region. In recent years, however, invitation has been open to members from South Asian countries, including India and Bangladesh, and Oceania, where participation in JILAF's Invitation Program had been low.

This fiscal year, for similar reasons, two people each from the Middle Eastern countries such as Jordan, Turkey, and Palestine were invited. As an ICFTU-APRO representative, there was a participant from Mongolia, as well as members from Malaysia and the Philippines, making a total of nine.

Initially, JILAF made a request to Egypt for participation, but the request was withdrawn because there were no suitable candidates. Also, regarding Palestine, where conflict has continued since the start of confrontation with Israel, and which presents differences in religion and custom, it may be said that inviting women from this region is very challenging. Against this background, being able to invite people from Palestine and elsewhere in the Middle East, and exchange views, particularly with Japanese union members and other working women, consti-

tutes a major result. This owes much to the wholehearted efforts of all the organizations involved, including the Israeli Embassy, which extended support regarding visas and border passage, and we would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation.

At the Rengo Central Women's Rally, which has become a main aspect of the invitations, the participants were overwhelmed by the many women gathered at Tokyo Big Sight (this time, over 20% of participants were male), but at the overseas symposium, Current Status and Problems of Women Workers in Asia, each participant gave a presentation on her own country's labor situation, and explained to the Japanese participants the social conditions surrounding the labor movement in that country and the issues affecting women workers there. Opinions were exchanged with those on the Japanese side, centered round Chairperson Hayashi, Assistant General Secretary of Rengo. The participants were able to hear about the actual situation in Japan, from people genuinely involved, with specific examples, resulting in deeper interchange.

Opinions were also heard from various standpoints, as the team endeavored to understand actual situation in Japan. For example, some participants were mystified that, although Japan has a stable society, an



▲ Team members giving presentations on their countries' labor situation in the Symposium at the Rengo Central Women's Rally

increasing number of women are choosing not to have children.

The participants' two-week stay included visits to Rengo, Rengo Nara, the All-Japan Prefectural and Municipal Workers Union (Jichiro), the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, and the Japan Productivity Center for Socio-Economic Development (JPC-SED), seminars on labor-management agreements, and a visit to Hiroshima. The team members were able to get to know Japan, not only in the labor field, but also from various areas, and they mentioned that Japan's traditional culture and post-war recovery had left a considerable impression. In presenting this report, we would like to express our gratitude to all those who cooperated in the team's endeavor.

CORRESPONDENCE

Ms. Song Kyungjin

Director, Women's Department

ICFTU-APRO

(FY2000 JILAF Invitation Program participant)

My job as Director of Women's Department at the ICFTU-APRO requires quite a good insight of women's rights and gender equality in countries in Asia and Pacific, coupled with a sound understanding of trade union movements and cultures in different countries in the region.

No doubt it is intriguing. At the same time, it is equally challenging, if not more.

One of the first difficulties I faced with during my early days at the ICFTU-APRO was dealing with sisters and brothers from diverse backgrounds. The ultimate goals of any trade union movement no matter where it may be are the same. However, modalities of pursuing the goals did not seem always the same. More often than not, they are different as a result of the various circumstances they are operating in.

In these early days, a good opportunity came to me. It was the JILAF Invitation Program for Young Women Trade Union Leaders in 2000 where I participated. It was quite an eye-opening experience for me in that I was able to learn about trade union move-

ment not only in Japan but also in other countries by exchanging and communicating while staying together for two full weeks. Our discussions into the late night woken us up and imbued us with a sense of responsibility. In the midst of our calm yet passionate discussions and debates, I realized a paucity of young people in the movement, particularly young women. It was a great venue to foster the spirit of solidarity, cooperation and sharing. We learnt what is most important in the trade union movement is solidarity.

The highlight of the Program in my view was our participation in the Rengo Central Women's Rally where all the participants were invited to take part in the Rally and the workshop discussions. What sensations we had there! Nervousness, excitement, restlessness, you name it we had it. What impressed us most though was some male faces participating in the Rally in support of the sisters' struggle for equality. It was another form of expressing solidarity. This is the lesson I will never forget whatever I do in my life.

With the valuable lessons I obtained from the JILAF Program, I came back to my work. As some of you might be aware, I am a staunch advocate for and supporter of the recruitment and development of young women union members into future leaders.

Many people have shown support and assistance towards my efforts. The JILAF is one of the supporters of this refreshing and wonderful idea (I like to believe so!). I am greatly encouraged that the JILAF is keen to continue its assistance to developing young women trade union leaders in the APRO region which coincides with one of the priorities for action of the ICFTU-APRO.

Also, I always make efforts to promote gender solidarity by bringing both sisters and brothers to the same forum in order for them to increase interaction for mutual understanding and harmony. As my hero Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, "We cannot walk alone anymore." This is the precept that is deeply engraved in me.

I am always grateful to the JILAF for its generous contribution to the women and youth programs of the ICFTU-APRO. I hope this excellent chemistry and long-standing working relationship will further in the coming years.

Solidarity forever!

* Sister Kyungjin, thank you for your letter. We are glad to know how you've been getting along.

Now, all participants in the JILAF Invitation Program, how have you been? We are looking forward to hearing from you.

11th ICFTU-APRO/OTC Institute/JILAF Advanced Leadership Course — Learning together with 26 colleagues from Asia-Pacific countries —

Here it is! When I got out of the taxi, the Pasir Ris training facility looked just like a resort! No, maybe more like a campsite. Around the rooms of each wing were numerous barbecue grills and a large swimming pool. When I entered my room, thinking, "Looks like I can have fun here," I found it to be huge, and made of concrete. Ants swarmed around a water pot. Huh? There's no hot water in this shower? On August 18, I had arrived in Singapore from Japan, to participate in the month-long 11th ICFTU-APRO/OTC Institute/JILAF Advanced Leadership Course*.

This year's course, the 11th, involved 27 people from 19 countries. It was a historic year, in that for the first time, women participants outnumbered men. To help participants acquire the knowledge and know-how needed by leaders who will play an important role in the future, and to strengthen international solidarity, the course comprises a



▲ Japanese team presenting its country report

diverse program, centered on group-work and exchange of opinions. There were a great variety of themes, including globalization and trade unions' responses to it, workers' fundamental rights, social security systems, international labor agreements, and

collective negotiation and the skills it requires. "Which ILO Article does this come under? What about maternity and childcare leave? What about countries with unemployment insurance?" The lecturers' questions were endless, and participants from other countries competed to provide explanations. I was continually overwhelmed by those people's pro-activity and enthusiasm, and I became acutely aware of the difficult conditions they face in countries where adverse labor conditions remain and labor disputes occur ceaselessly, in countries where turf battles among fellow unions cause even more confusion, in East Timor, where trade union activities are starting on a volunteer basis, and in Burma, where union activities are not permitted, so activists are forced to campaign in other countries. At the same time, I felt ashamed of my ignorance of even such basic matters, despite being born in Japan, which has favorable systems.

That month spent with Asian colleagues whose diet, culture, customs, and, of course, language, are completely different was, to tell the truth, quite tiring. But the tiredness was outweighed many times by the fun! In "Teamwork & Leadership Session," outdoor class held in Sentosa, we searched for puzzles in the sand, rode bicycles on the sea, and ran "many-legged races" while shouting to each other. Then, everyone, regardless of gender or nationality, became totally engrossed in the activities, as well as covered in mud. Colleagues who had never cooked for themselves in their own countries made shaky-looking sandwiches and enjoyed having barbecues. One time, I bought some butter that



▲ At a ceremony on the final day

didn't have the "approved" mark for someone's religion, and got miffed when they said they mustn't eat it. There was also much perplexity due to language and cultural barriers, but gradually the words "international solidarity" and "colleagues" took on a more familiar sensation.

On the closing ceremony, we sang our own version of the song "We Have A Dream." We cut out cardboard, wrote "Solidarity" on it, colored it, thought up designs, and practiced several times. As in this song, everyone is striving toward a goal from his or her own standpoint and situation. I would like to work hard every day so that I, too, become always able to say with confidence, "I have a dream."

Akemi Maeda, JILAF

*This training for young trade union leaders is conducted cooperatively by JILAF, ICFTU-APRO, and OTC Institute, in order to nurture leaders with advanced skills. Each year, young union leaders from ICFTU-APRO affiliates spend about one month on the course.

A Letter from a Trainee No.16

The Same Expression as DiCaprio

The JILAF 7th International Trade Union Leaders' Course has begun, and the first session is about to end. I have been attending as a JILAF trainee from the All NTT Workers' Union of Japan, and since November, I have been taking this course. I also work in JILAF's Invitation Projects Department, but I am thankful that, owing to understanding and support from the person in charge, I can concentrate on my training. This course provides wonderful training, as it covers a broad range of subjects, including the English, trade union movement, and labor knowledge essential to international activists, together

with Japanese economic and social issues, as well as details of JILAF projects. Using a method called "shadowing," I am absorbed in my studies every day. In shadowing, sound (right-brain understanding) alone is not enough, nor is meaning (left-brain understanding) alone. Instead, you use the left brain and right brain together, instantaneously, to understand what your partner is trying to say, then speak. It's still very difficult, but I'm trying really hard to become proficient as soon as possible. The other day, Leonardo DiCaprio came to Japan to promote a film, and when I watched him

on TV, he began a speech by saying, "It is my great pleasure and honor to be back in Japan!" He actually used this expression, which I'd learned in the course. Being able to understand it easily made a big impression on me. At my level of ability, I get really happy about such simple things! But anyway, I intend to do my best during the coming year, to live up to the support I've received from so many people.

**Keiko Yamanaka
JILAF Trainee**

JILAF 7th International Trade Union Leaders' Course Begins

—Eleven trainees completed 6th course—

On November 1, at the JILAF Meeting Room, the opening ceremony for the JILAF 7th International Trade Union Leaders' Course was held. Some participants had heard that it was a "very challenging course," and people's expressions were a little tense, but everyone was full of determination.

This course has been held since 1996, with the aim of nurturing personnel active in international areas of the trade union movement. Needless to say, it includes English, as well as a general curriculum covering basic knowledge of union activities, and every year, trainees from various industry unions study together for about 10 months. The course has earned high regard from its total of 52 participants over the last six years, and after completion, many participants play roles in international activities by trade unions and GUF activities.

This year, the course has a total of 12 trainees. In addition to two new JILAF staff, there are two people from Rengo, four from the All NTT Workers' Union, and one each from UI Zensen, Jichiro, the Japan Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Workers' Unions, and the Japan Teachers' Union. This will be a long course at around one year, and we are grateful for the cooperation of each local industrial union.

Meanwhile, 11 trainees have completed the 6th course, and a completion ceremony was held on October 9. We have high hopes regarding everyone's future activities.



▲ Studying hard in an English class

JILAF Calendar (September–December 2002)

1. Invitation Program

- West Africa Team (September 5-18)
- South Asia Team (September 26 - October 9)
- Women's Trade Union Team (October 17-30)
- China Team (November 11-22)
- Korea, Hong Kong, and Mongolia Team (November 28 - December 11)

2. Field Projects (Only those involving specialists from Japan)

- Seminar on Mongolian Labor-Management Relations (September 28 - October 5, Mongolia)
- Vietnam VGCL/JILAF Seminar on Labor-Management Relations (October 16-23, Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh)
- Nepal NTUC Non-Formal Education School Project (October 26 - November 4, Katmandu

and elsewhere)

- Seminar on Unionization of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises in China (November 21 - December 1, Beijing and elsewhere)
- Nepal POSITIVE Nationwide Training Seminar (November 23 - December 6, Katmandu and elsewhere)

3. Conferences, etc.

- Attendance at ICFTU-APRO Coordination Meeting (September 11-13, Singapore)
- Participation in Social Asia Forum (October 24-26, Osaka)
- General Affairs Committee Meeting held (October 31, Tokyo)
- 37th Board Meeting of Board of Directors and Councilors held (November 22, Tokyo)

4. Overseas Surveys

- Surveys related to employment in Europe (September 15-28; Denmark, Belgium, UK)
- Surveys related to employment in China (Primary) (October 6-9, Beijing)
- Surveys related to employment in China (Secondary) (November 26 - December 1, Chongqing city)

5. Others

- JILAF 7th International Trade Union Leaders' Course started (November 1 - September 30, 2003; 12 trainees)
- Dispatch of lecturers to ILO Africa Productivity Workshop (November 22 - December 4, Kenya)
- Study Meeting on International Labor Issues held (December 20, Tokyo)

Inside Out

JILAF officials and staff have undergone a few reassignments. Ruri Suzuki from the Research and Public Affairs Department has returned to Rengo Head Office, Yuki Ito from the Field Projects Department has returned to the All NTT Workers' Union, and Akihiro Ando also from the Field Projects Department has transferred to the International Bureau of Rengo Head Office. We now welcome Koji Suzuki, from the Confederation of Japan Automobile Workers' Union, to the Field Projects Department, and Keiko Yamanaka, from All NTT, as a JILAF Trainee.



(Koji Suzuki, seconded from the Confederation of Japan Automobile Workers' Union)

In order to utilize my "passionate ideas," "feeling for the daily life of ordinary people in South East Asia," and "decade of experience in the trade union movement," first of all, I would like to study by getting back to my beginner's mind.



(Keiko Yamanaka, seconded from the All NTT Workers' Union of Japan)

Through the work of the Invitation Projects Department, from a woman's standpoint, I would like to learn about overseas labor situations and women's issues, and to improve my skills, so that I can contribute on the international stage.