



NEWSLETTER

Japan International Labour Foundation

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Invitation Program Participants Exceed 1,500

Women's participation is also rising.

From fiscal 2003, invitations from developed nations are also planned.

Since JILAF was established in 1989, it has steadily accumulated proven records in the promotion of deeper mutual understanding between Japan and other nations through international interchange in the trade union movement, cooperation for nurturing and developing free, democratic trade unions in developing countries, and through such means, contribution to the sound economic and social development of developing countries in other words, in development cooperation for such countries.

Among these initiatives, one of our main activities since our establishment has been the invitation of overseas trade union leaders to Japan.

We have proceeded with our invitation programs while obtaining the understanding and cooperation of those organizations involved, beginning with JTUC-Rengo, which founded JILAF, Rengo affiliated organizations, Rengo local organizations, the Japan Institute of Labour (JIL), the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Thanks to their supports, the number of trade union leaders invited to Japan by fiscal 2002 reached 1,535 from 92 countries and two territories. In fiscal 2003, we are planning to invite another 119 trade union leaders. (In this number, participants from developed countries, programs of which have been transferred from JIL to JILAF from this year onward, are also included. Details of the countries from which invitations are planned for fiscal 2003 will be given on our web site as they become clear.)

Invited participants are trade union leaders from developing countries, primarily in Asia, but also in Africa and Latin America. Initially, after the establishment of JILAF, invitations from Europe and North America were also included, although such invitations have been small in scale.

From the start, JILAF has encouraged participation of women, and has endeavored to provide an environment that makes it easy for women to participate, by approaching the organizations concerned, specifying women's teams, etc. As a result, in recent



▲ Women's team visited Rengo-affiliated organizations

years, over 30% of participants each year has been female, contributing to increasing opportunities for interchange with Japanese women in the trade union movement, which serve to deepen mutual understanding.

Upon returning to their home countries after participating in the invitation program, many participants continue their trade union activities while utilizing the experience they have gained, and take on even more responsibilities in the trade union movement. In addition to their friendly relations with Japanese trade unions, participants also gain a deep understanding of Japan.

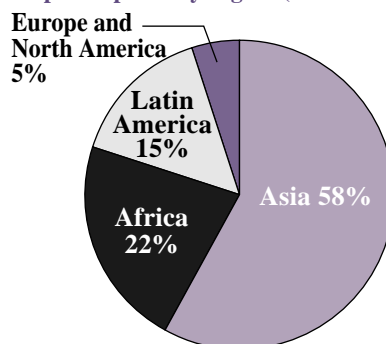
Countless remarkable stories remain from this history of 1,535 participants. For example, there have been religiously devoted participants who prayed to Mecca at

the prescribed times, even in the middle of lectures. There have been participants from strife-torn Palestine, who only arrived in Japan after many stringent checks. There was a participant who fell over in a hotel bathtub, and returned home two months late. There was a participant who, from representing the union movement, went on to represent his country as President. At times when people were unable to meet at the arranged place due

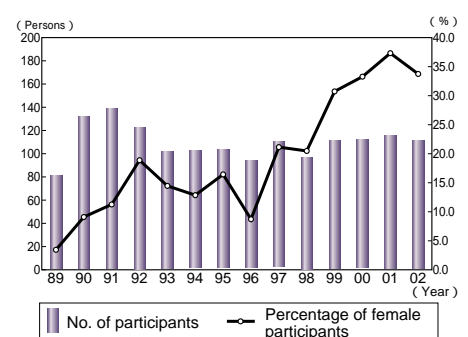
to insufficient directions, or were admonished, we felt acutely how this project is the result of cooperation from all the organizations concerned.

Given such causes for reflection, our project management and program have arrived at the current form, and we are now making further improvements. Meanwhile, budgetary constraints on the project grow stricter year by year. Nevertheless, even under such circumstances, the reputation of and expectations for JILAF programs and projects among the world's trade unions especially in developing nations are growing year by year. While striving to cut costs, we must continue our work in the future to meet those expectations. From now on, we would like to ask for even greater understanding and cooperation of those organizations concerned.

Percentage of invitation program participants by region (1989-2002)



Invited participant numbers and percentage of female participants



POSITIVE Program Shows Development in New Field

—Trade unions display their strength in developing POSITIVE in Pakistan coal mine—

On January 31, 2003, in Chakwal located between Islamabad and Lahore, an APFOL (ALL Pakistan Federation of Labour) Mining POSITIVE follow-up seminar was held at a coal mine in the State of Panjab. Mr. Toyama from Tokyo Occupational Health Center, JILAF Executive Director Iwata, and Inaba from the JILAF Field Project Department attended the seminar as observers. This was the first delegation of JILAF to Pakistan since February 2001, and the first ever participation of JILAF staff in a mining industry's POSITIVE seminar.

Mining POSITIVE is an individual POSITIVE program being developed in the mining industry by APFOL and two other Pakistan national centers (PNFTU: Pakistan National Federation of Trade Unions and APFTU: All Pakistan Federation of Trade Unions), with support from JILAF. The project's content is being developed while improving it to make it more relevant to mining. In fact, the manuals used in the seminar were produced by APFOL in 2000, using its own case studies. It has been about nine years since POSITIVE began, and in

Pakistan, through local union initiatives, new developments have become evident.

This seminar was attended by 30 mining trade union leaders from the Chakwal district, and Mr. Ra Saeed Khattak, General Secretary of Chishitsu Mining Union, served as a trainer. The mine where the seminar took place has a canteen, lodgings, and bungalows for managers, but because there was no meeting room big enough for 30 people, long tables and chairs were set up under the eaves of the canteen, to form a temporary meeting place for the seminar.

In a checklist exercise, participants actually entered the mine, and examined the conditions at work sites. After a round trip through the mine lasting about one hour, the checklists were completed back above ground, and lively group discussion took place regarding satisfactory points and points that needed improvement in the mine.

The seminar was held over three days, and on the final day, proposals for improvement were summarized in conclusion, and presented to the Dangdut mine employer.

Because of our limited time frame, we could attend only the first day. However, entering the mine, we experienced the extremely difficult working conditions there. We were also able to observe the trade union leaders who passionately discussed improvements in those conditions, and once again, we felt that JILAF support is being put to good use.

General Secretary Khattak strongly expressed his hopes



▲ Back above ground, trade union leaders examined the checklist

regarding Mining POSITIVE: "Although the mining industry is a very dangerous place to work, it has not been a priority in trade union initiatives so far. In this region alone, in 2002, an accident that left 34 people dead occurred. In the future, through POSITIVE program, we would like to heighten workers' interest in health, safety and workers' rights, and work step-by-step to eliminate industrial accidents and improve the working environment." Through the continuation of such proactive initiatives by trade unions, it is hoped that governments and employers will be encouraged to act, so that miners' working conditions will be drastically improved.

So far at JILAF, POSITIVE program has been conducted in six countries: Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, the Philippines, Mongolia, and Thailand. However, it is extremely significant that, in ways such as this, local unions are specializing and developing POSITIVE program to meet local needs. In other countries, too, we hope that unions will adopt and develop POSITIVE program as a tool, in line with local needs, and will endeavor to improve occupational health and safety and strengthen the trade union movement.



▲ Trade union leaders hearing an explanation from the trainer, General Secretary Khattak

The coal mine is about 100 m deep. The entrance is about 2 m square, with rails that lower trolleys laid in the center. In order to check the workplace, participants walked in single file down the uneven, slippery stairway beside the rails. When we arrived at the bottom, the gallery narrowed to about 1.5 m square. Inside the gallery, although light bulbs were installed at intervals of 10-15 m, the light was weak, and in many places, we could not see the ground at our feet. Although it was difficult to see in the darkness of the mine, there was a considerable amount of dust, and in some places, flash photography did not record people and objects, due to the dust reflection of the light. Proceeding about 100 m, hunching over and out of breath, we finally arrived at the work site where miners were digging coal. There, eight workers, half-naked and covered in mud, without helmets or masks, dug out the coal, placed it in sacks, and carried it on their backs. The surroundings were very hot and humid due to the workers' body heat and the moisture in the mine, the motor of the ventilation fan clattered away, and the work was done in an extremely harsh environment. When we entered, none of the miners looked at all displeased; instead, they stopped working, welcomed us with smiling faces, and extended their cooperation.



▲ Miners working under adverse conditions of high temperature, humidity, and noise. Inside the mine.

Indonesia's ASPEK: Expanding trade unions from bank employees to all service industry workers

Three years have passed since UNI was created through the merger of four GUFs. UNI's influence can be observed in every region, through examples such as the formation of the Unified Service Union (Ver.di) in Germany. Indonesia's UNI affiliate ASPEK is another success story.

Since the military coup in 1965, trade union activities have been suppressed in Indonesia. What changed this situation was the resignation of President Suharto. Indonesia's new government ratified the ILO Convention No. 87 (Freedom of Association), enabling the formation of unions. I met Brother Saepul Tavip for the first time at a labor law seminar in Jakarta in 1998. He had been a union leader of the Hong Kong Shanghai Bank, but he was dismissed for leading a strike, and he had just formed an association that combined trade unions of foreign banks. During the financial crisis, many bank employees were laid off; nevertheless, they were young and highly qualified. Even now, I clearly remember being overwhelmed by their enthusiasm when I attended the bank workers' seminar.

Like begets like. In 1999, Brother Tavip contacted employees of the international telephone company Indosat, and succeeded in forming a union. At a telecom seminar in Puncak, in the suburbs of Jakarta, employees of other companies also participated, and the enthusiasm of those young people made it a flourishing event. I remember with nostalgia how a couple who met at the seminar went so far as to marry. At that time, the Association of Foreign Bank Union changed its name to Association of Indonesia Trade Unions (Affiliated to UNI) (ASPEK), and in response to the UNI movement, it expressed an intention to unionize all sectors relevant to UNI. Under such leadership from Brother Tavip, ASPEK, which began with 5,000 employees of foreign banks, has grown in three years to encompass

PROFILE



Eiichi Ito

Started working for the Post Office in 1971, and after serving as a field officer of Zentei, transferred to Zentei's Head Office in 1991. In 1997, became Director of PTT's Tokyo Office. Following integration with UNI in 2000, took current position as Director of UNI-APRO Tokyo Office and Executive Secretary of UNI-LC Japan.

six subsections for the banking, postal, telecom, commerce, media, printing, and property and security services sectors 71 trade unions, and 106,000 members

ASPEK has not inherited the legacy of the past, but has proceeded to create a free, democratic union with younger members at its core. The fact that, through JILAF support, ASPEK was able to hold three seminars in fiscal year 2002, in Medan (September), Bandung (January 2003), and Jakarta (February 2003), indicates that ASPEK is further expanding geographically. At the ASPEK-JILAF Workshop on Globalization, held in Jakarta in February, Chairman Nagumo of UNI-LC Japan (JSD Chairman) and JILAF's Field Project Section Manager Suzuki attended, as well as myself. "At any rate, ASPEK is young," was our impression.

In any county, unionization of the service industry is difficult. Nevertheless, the creation of unions by ASPEK's young people, with support from JILAF, has progressed further through these seminars, and we hope that the success story will continue.

A Letter from a Trainee No.17

Accompanying the Russia/NIS Team

Some time ago, I worked to invite a team of eight people from Russia and the NIS (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, the last of which was invited for the first time). Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, in the midst of a transition to market economies and democracy in USSR, the situation has remained confused, and it cannot be said that workers' living environment is stable. Compared with Japan, trade unions will have to bear and become more accountable for much heavier social and economic burdens to contribute to public, pension funds and healthcare system, occupational safety, and employment stability. Due to non-payment of wages and other handicaps, it is difficult to secure financial resources for union expenses, and various challenges remain, including relations with politi-

cal parties, other unions and institutions, as well as issues such as union integration. Through the invitation program, it seems that the team members searched for solutions to these challenges and obtained substantial results. We also gained a lot from the team members. Even under difficult circumstances, they believe there is hope for the future, and have shown themselves to be vigorous activists. I have a strong belief that the free and democratic trade unions will help nations get on the road to democracy and sound economies. We arranged the invitation in the firm conviction that Russia and the NIS, where the team members are striving hard, will cer-



▲ In front of Girls' Festival dolls in a hotel lobby

tainly become admirable democracies in the future.

Keiko Yamanaka
JILAF Trainee

JTUC-Rengo Women Leaders Visited Thailand

Over the eight days from January 21-28, 2003, for the purpose of promoting international exchange and mutual understanding in the labor field for women trade union leaders, JILAF dispatched the International Exchange Team of Women (12 people) to Thailand.

This fiscal year the program's 12th the initially planned destination for the team was the Philippines. However, in mid October, just before the team was due to depart, an incident that appeared to be a terrorist bombing occurred in Manila, and the plan was needed to be changed for the safety reason. The destination was changed to Thailand, and the team departed at the beginning of the year 2003.

In addition to the team leader Okushima, Director of JTUC-Rengo's Gender Equality Division, the team consisted of women leaders, aged between their 20s and 50s, selected by regional Rengo chapters. In Thailand, as well as government ministries, agencies and NGOs, the team was able to visit, through the cooperation of TWARO, TWFT (The Textile, Garment, and Leather Workers' Federation of Thailand), and through that of IMF-JC, TEAM (Confederation of Thailand Electrical Appliances, Automobile, Metal Workers) as well as affiliated unions. During the visits, opinions were exchanged regarding issues concerning "women's labor issues." Additionally, with help of TWFT and TEAM, the team was able to visit factories under the umbrella of those unions.

At each location visited, information on workers' situation in Thailand and Japan was exchanged, and lively discussion took place. Among the opinions, a characteristic one heard from both Thai men and Thai women was that "In Thailand, there's no sexual discrimination." Thai women are active in society, and work, at least as much as men. There is no wage gap between men and women, and men are also willing to help women with housework. On the other hand, it was also explained that there are few women at the management level, and few women among union leaders. In Thailand, in conjunction with government restructuring at the end of last year, the "Ministry of Social and Human

Development" was established, and within it, a "Office of Women's Affairs and Family Development (OWAFD)" was set up. Consequently, from now on, women's awareness will be heightened by the establishment of the new office. We hope to see further development.

In addition to official visits to organizations, the team joined in volunteer activities in Bangkok. This was a project conducted jointly by Rengo and national center (LCT), in which a flourishing sports festival for Thai children with disabilities, was held at a gym in Bangkok on January 25 and 26. The team members mixed with local volunteers for the children in their athletic games. For each team member, this was the first such experience, but they wholeheartedly strove to join in and overcome the language barrier, between the local volunteers and children. They observed the event through to a successful conclusion.



▲ At the sports festival in Bangkok

Although their stay in Thailand was short, many participants have kept in touch with local friends, and have told us: "I felt and gained a great deal during the trip." We hope the team members will utilize their experiences in Thailand in their future activities, and help develop the labor movement further.

Finally, we would like to express our wholehearted gratitude to everyone who helped us with the program.

JILAF Calendar (January-March 2003)

1. Invitation Programs

- Russia/NIS Team (January 29 - February 11)
- South America/Mozambique Team (February 13-26)

2. Field Projects (only those projects involving specialists sent from Japan)

- China Occupational Health and Safety (POSITIVE) Introductory Seminar (January 9-20, Ningbo)
- Pakistan POSITIVE Seminar (January 30 - February 8, Karachi)
- Monitoring "INTUC/JILAF Learning Center for Children from Poor Households"

(January 30 - February 3, India)

- Indonesia ASPEK Globalization Seminar and FSPMI Occupational Health and Safety Seminar (February 23 - March 8, Jakarta)
- Southern Africa Project (March 3-26, Namibia)

3. Meetings, etc.

- Study Group on International Labor Issues (January 31, Tokyo)
- 17th Industrial federation / GUF Discussion Meeting (February 5, Tokyo)
- 17th Planning Committee Meeting

(February 5, Tokyo)

- 37th General Affairs Committee Meeting (February 13, Tokyo)
- 38th Board Meeting and Evaluation Committee Meeting (February 27, Tokyo)

4. Others

- Dispatch of Women's Team for International Exchange (January 21-28, 12 members, Thailand)
- Participation in Training Seminar and Indian Study Tour for International Cooperation Activists, sponsored by Rengo (February 3-9, Bangalore)

Inside Out

Let us introduce our new staff member who has been working for JILAF since January 2003.

"Experience in Asia and Pacific region with ICFTU-APRO will be hopefully an asset to conduct programs in other regions such as Africa, Central and South America. In addition to the former experience in information and youth activities, I would like to develop new projects, which meet the real needs of union members, in the proposed region in the future."

(Midori Sasaki, seconded from the JTUC-RENGO)

