



NEWSLETTER

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Monitoring School Management in Nepal

A is for apple, B is for bus was the learning phrase we often heard loudly repeated by school children in classrooms in Nepal. These children, who only eight months ago had been deprived of studying and playing, were seen learning with energy and enthusiasm. In mid-February, we had the opportunity to meet such cheerful youngsters when monitoring the NTUC/JILAF Non-Formal Education School Project. Below is an introduction to six of the schools we visited; namely the Kaski, Sunsari and Jhapa Schools established in 2003, and the already existing Katmandu, Bhaktapur and Moran Schools.

Kaski School: the Kaski School has two classroom facilities located in two different places within the city, so that children can easily attend lessons. The nearer the lessons are to their homes, the more children that can attend. In fact, the absentee rate is quite low. The School should be commended for the new approaches it has adopted since its very first year in operation.

Sunsari School: the Sunsari School, situated near the border between Nepal and India, is a facility that is operated by renting out the first floor of a two-story farmhouse. We visited the School just before the afternoon class began, and there we saw adorable school children dressed in their uniforms coming to school, as they walked along the trail between rice fields. This new school has also made efforts to make it easy for children to attend lessons, including flexibly changing school hours and serving tea during break time.

Jhapa School: Jhapa is a place that is famous for producing the highest quality tea in Nepal. And most of the students at the Jhapa School are children of tea plantation workers. There are two facts to be mentioned about the Jhapa School. First, the classroom currently has no walls and thus the students are not protected from the elements of weather. However, a new school building is scheduled to be constructed by 2004. Second, there are some children who

belong to ethnic groups that do not use Nepalese, however these children have now become able to use Nepalese to a certain extent thanks to the hard efforts of the School staff.

Katmandu School: the Katmandu School is located in a section of a poor residential area that is very quiet and far-removed from the clamor of Katmandu, Nepal's capital. The smiling faces of the students we met here left a lasting impression on us. We were told that the children here actively participate in classroom lessons and are also provided with ample room for play space. However, ten students have already quit school due to changes in their parents' workplaces. Day workers in Nepal sometimes find it difficult to settle in one location because their workplaces often change. And even though the children are provided with opportunities to learn, they are occasionally forced to leave school for certain reasons. As such, the child labor issue is considerably complicated and serious here.

Bhaktapur School: the Bhaktapur School has promoted unique and carefully-planned educational activities, including direct dialogue with the parents of truants, efforts to help students transfer to public schools, and reserving funds for purchasing school equipment.

Moran School: When visiting the Moran School, we were reminded how much the enthusiasm of teachers and school staff can directly affect student motivation. The scholastic ability of the students at the Moran School was much higher compared to the other monitored schools, and the



▲ Children raising their hands and answering questions



▲ What is this syllable? The students pronounce English words in a loud voice.

students were also the most energetic. The efforts made at the Bhaktapur and Moran Schools should be shared with the other schools, so that all of them can further boost educational performance.

Overall, it can be said that these schools, though they have a few minor problems, indeed provide a good environment for children to learn. Still, the monitoring showed that there remain issues that need to be resolved and/or improved by the schools, including the scholastic ability gap seen among students, and the issue of the students who cannot go on to public school could be followed up.

The school year for fiscal 2003 ends in March 2004. And the new semester starts in July. During the break period in between, we would like to discuss activities for 2004 with the leaders of the Nepal Trade Union Congress (NTUC) and Manager Wada, so that the 2004 educational initiatives can be even more productive than those of the previous year.

Finally, we would like to express our appreciation to all of the organizations that have extended support and understanding for the project, especially the Japanese Electrical Electronic & Information Union (JEIU), the Mitsubishi Electric Workers Union and the Tokyo Electric Power Workers Union, which provided financial assistance for the 2003 activities.

Final Seminar on Labor-Management Relations Held by JILAF and ACFTU Shift to "POSITIVE"

In March 2004, JILAF and ACFTU (All China Federation of Trade Unions) jointly held seminars on labor-management relations in Guangzhou, Guangdong Province, and Huhhot in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. These two cities are significantly different both in terms of their climate and economic conditions.

The aim of the seminar on labor-management relations was to help other countries learn about Japanese systems and experiences in this field, and it was initially launched in 1997 with the themes Japan's labor legislation and the current status and challenges of the trade union movement of Japan. In China, as the transition to a market economy progressed rapidly due to reform and door-opening policies which were bolstered since 1992, a new trade union movement and the creation of new labor-management relations became urgently needed. When an ACFTU delegation headed by its President Jianxing Wei visited Japan in 1996 at the invitation of JTUC-RENGO, the then JTUC-RENGO leaders exchanged views with ACFTU, taking into account its position as a major member of ICFTU, and agreed to re-start a new relationship to promote exchange and cooperation. On its basis, JILAF also expressed its readiness to start new cooperation with ACFTU. The seminar thus began under such background conditions and has been held in almost all of the Chinese provinces. To date, it has already been held 22 times and attended by a total of 1,508 leaders. We firmly believe that sharing Japanese experiences has contributed to organizing trade unions in China, where the economy is becoming more and more market-oriented.

In this seminar, JILAF President Teruhito Tokumoto gave a lecture on the current status and challenges regarding the Japanese trade union movement. Vice President Masayuki Nomiya also spoke about employment policies and labor legislation in Japan. A representative from the Chinese side subsequently



reported on the current status and challenges of the Chinese trade union movement. The participants comprised high-level officers from trade union federations at the municipal and industrial levels, as well as those from legal departments of provincial level ACFTU and principals or vice-principals of ACFTU college for leadership development. The attendees took notes so as not to miss any of the important information presented by the lecturers, and they actively asked questions in light of their respective situations.

In Beijing, JILAF officials met with ACFTU Chairman Zhao-guo Wang, who stated that JILAF's project has been very important in further promoting ties of friendship between China and Japan.

The seminar on labor-management relations, which was implemented over an eight-year period, came to a conclusion in March 2004. Henceforth, JILAF will promote the POSITIVE Program for Occupational Health and Safety at work place, which was officially launched in January 2003. JILAF will continue to promote closer cooperation with ACFTU to help address the occupational health and safety issues China faces.

Report on Field Study in NGO's HIV/AIDS Project in Thailand

JILAF is preparing a program that will support HIV/AIDS projects in Africa in the future. In conjunction with this, I had an opportunity to participate in a field study session in Thailand, which was sponsored by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan and organized by a health care-related NGO network. A group of six members from the NGO network visited the project site of SHARE, an NGO that is active in northeastern Thailand.

We were able to learn and acquire various clues and ideas helpful in drawing up a future HIV/AIDS project. In Thailand, we saw how junior-high and senior-high school students utilize school broadcasting during lunch breaks and after school, to prevent HIV/AIDS and to provide information. If similar methods are applied in workplaces, perhaps they can be effective tools for providing more workers with basic knowledge related with HIV/AIDS.

Since it is important for individual persons to change their attitude, a kind of game was used during the training session which helped participants put themselves in the shoes of people infected with HIV. In this game, you change water using a syringe, and if the changed water turns red (from an added reagent), it means you are HIV infected.

The aspect that left a particularly lasting impression during the

training was the initiatives of a group of PLWHA (people living with HIV/AIDS) who are actively involved in the project. By serving as role models and showing newly infected people that they can lead



▲ A game where water is changed using a syringe: An approach toward participatory prevention and education of HIV/AIDS

actively healthy lives and have a positive attitude, needless fear associated with HIV/AIDS can be eliminated.

Such role models provide tremendous hope and support to HIV infected people. Therefore, in the process of designing our future project, we will focus on the area of human development. That is, we would like to foster capable and proactive trainers, including PLWHA, so that the prevention message can reach every level in the workplace.

Upon my arrival in Dhaka in March 2004 (as a member of the Informal Economy Field Visit program) I was welcomed by the warm familiar smiles of the trade union leaders from the ICFTU-Bangladesh Council. On my previous visit to Dhaka (as a member of the JILAF Field Project Department in March 2002), I had worked with them in holding a POSITIVE conference and had discussed future field projects with them day and night. At that time, I was scheduled to return soon to the trade union I originally came from, and never imagined that I would be able to meet them two years later.

About 17 months have passed now since I was dispatched to the ICFTU-APRO Secretariat. During this period, I have observed JILAF's field projects and reconfirmed what great contributions they have made and how significant they are. Assistance should not be intrusive. Though it is sometimes difficult, it is very important to help local trade unions conduct activities that meet local conditions and needs. I as a former staff member am proud of JILAF for steadily promoting such a project and contributing to the advancement of the trade union movements, societal conditions and economies of developing countries.

One of the challenges APRO urgently needs to address is the issue of informal economies. What should trade unions do to protect workers who are not covered by labor laws and who are disadvantaged? The field-visit team I was a member of was sent to find out the answers to this question. However, what we really saw was far beyond imagination. People were working in very poor conditions. For example, women and children were breaking stones and bricks with their bare hands under the hot blazing sun. And boys were working in sewing mills nonstop without rest in dusty, poorly ventilated rooms. Their wages were paid at piece rates and at most were around one dollar per day. The details of the employment

PROFILE



Mamiko Suzuki

Senior Officer, ICFTU-APRO Workers Rights Division and Youth Department. Stationed in Singapore.

Born in 1972. In 1995, joined NTT. In December 1998, became an executive committee member of the Chiba Branch, All NTT Workers Union of Japan. From November 2000 to July 2002, dispatched to JILAF to work for the Field Project Department. In July 2002, became an executive committee member of the Eastern Japan Headquarters, All NTT Workers Union of Japan. In December 2002, dispatched to ICFTU-APRO by RENGO.

contracts for such jobs were very vague and ambiguous. It is hard to clearly distinguish between such jobs and self-owned businesses. The employers are small-sized subcontractors and cannot afford to pay workers decent wages and allowances. In other words, conventional methods of organizing workers and the concept of labor-management negotiations do not exist in this country. Then what can be done? Though no cure-all solution has yet to be found, APRO intends to thoroughly discuss this situation with its affiliates and will strive to improve conditions. During this process, APRO will also consider which activities can directly benefit workers, including the establishment of cooperatives by trade unions.

There remain many problems in Asia. In order to solve them, APRO needs to further promote cooperation with JILAF. I would like to serve as a link that brings APRO and JILAF closer together, and I aim to make contributions towards the development of the trade union movement in Asia.

International Cooperation Efforts by Trade Unions — No.4

UI Zensen's Social Action Programs *Voluntas* Initiatives

Hiroyuki Ueno

Standing Member, Central Executive Committee,
Director of Member's Service Center
UI Zensen

Voluntas initiatives were launched in 1996 in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Japanese Federation of Textile, Garment, Chemical, Mercantile, and Allied Industry Workers Unions (former Zensen). The Latin word *voluntas* means of free mind or goodwill attitude. *Voluntas* initiatives thus are literally dependant on the willingness of trade union members themselves.

One of the major programs is our Overseas *Voluntas* Initiative project. This is a social action program carried out in close cooperation with NGOs, such as OISCA, Shapla Neer and Sarvodaya. This program not only offers financial aid, but also sends a delegation to Bangladesh and Sri Lanka so that trade union members can be directly involved in planting mangroves, child education activities, village development efforts and so on. The delegation is chosen

from among applicants. Every year, the number of union members who apply exceeds the number of openings.

Another prominent feature is the wide range of activities that are implemented. This



includes donating used clothing and paying for the transport of such, donating foreign currency that is not used during overseas trips, and donating used CDs. UI Zensen has supported developing nations in

collaboration with NGOs in order to promote these activities. It has also succeeded in winning understanding and compassion from trade union members through various efforts, such as the presentation of a social contribution award and offering a support system for members involved in volunteer activities.

UI Zensen was established in 2002 as a result of the merger of CSG-RENGO and the former Zensen, and has since developed its social activities. In July 2004, it will launch vocational training for new graduates without jobs in Mongolia. This support will be offered for five years. We are now closely examining the target areas for our assistance efforts. UI Zensen is expected to play a more active role by making use of its know-how and its rich network of personal contacts.

Women's International Exchange Team Sent to Vietnam

This was the first for Women's International Exchange Team to visit Vietnam. They visited several major cities, including Hanoi, Hue and Ho Chi Minh, where the transition to a market economy has been on-going ever since the adoption of the Doi Moi (reform) policy. They traveled to the headquarters and regional branches of the Vietnam General Confederation of Labour (VGCL), as well as Toyota Motor Vietnam, the Labour Bureau of the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, the Vietnam Women's Union (with a membership of over 11 million), a Children's Home supported by Jichiro, local textile companies and other facilities. At these sites, the Women's Team exchanged views and opinions on working conditions, including wages, revision of the labor law, trade union activities, women's social advancement, and women's participation in decision making. The discussion focused on the difference in the mandatory retirement age stipulated by the labor law, and approaches toward equality between the sexes. Vietnam is a country that geographically extends north to south, similar to Japan, and there appear to be regional differences in terms of politics, economy, society and human relations. Views expressed by concerned parties that the team members met with were also somewhat different, probably because they have a different position in each of their respective organizations. The Japanese team members were able to get a glimpse into the appearance versus reality situation in Vietnam, which is a socialist country where the public sense of equality between the



sexes is said to be stronger than in Japan. Overall, this exchange experience proved to be very fruitful both for Japan and Vietnam.

In Vietnam, the birth rate is around 2.4% and the unemployment rate is at 5.8%, both of which are higher compared to Japan. However, women are advancing into the fledgling labor market and can even be found working in governmental agencies. Vietnam will surely continue to make further efforts to promote equality between the sexes and foster social and economic development. Although an untimely outbreak of bird flu was a source of concern, this project was able to be carried out as planned thanks to the participants' understanding and cooperation.

Activities Plan for Fiscal 2004 Formulated

JILAF's Activities Plan for fiscal 2004 was formulated and presented at the 42nd Board Meeting and Councilors Meeting held on May 27. Japan's economic and fiscal conditions have not yet experienced major improvement, and JILAF has also remained in a severe fiscal environment. For example, yields from fund management have been dropping due to low interest rates. Despite such circumstances, however, JILAF intends to expand its invitation programs for the trade unions in developed countries which started in the latter half of fiscal 2003. JILAF also plans to carry out new field projects with support from RENGO and its affiliates. It is also important to further encourage women to participate in JILAF's projects.

Many observers agree that NGOs play a significant role in the field of international cooperation, and JILAF as an NGO has a major part to perform. In the context of an overall market-oriented atmosphere, the international solidarity of workers is more needed than ever. Trade unions in developing nations and others have come to have higher expectations of JILAF's initiatives. To meet such demands, we will continue to pursue efficient management in order to promote high-quality projects.

JILAF Calendar (March — May 2004)

1. Invitation Programs

- China Team: May 13-26

2. Field Projects

- Pakistan POSITIVE Monitoring: Febru-

ary 20-March 1; Lahore, Islamabad, and others

- ACFTU Seminar on Labor-Management Relations: March 16-24; Guangzhou and Huhhot

- Bangladesh ICTTU-BC Project Monitoring: March 20-22

- Discussion of a school project for India: March 23-27

Inside Out

Asako Yanase, joined JILAF in February 2004.

Until now I have not had much experience in the area of trade union activities and union-level support for development projects. It is quite stimulating to be involved in such. I have many things to learn and at times feel somewhat overwhelmed.

However, I will try my best so that I can reach a level on par with other staff members as soon as possible.

Asako Yanase

