

RECENT NWEC ACTIVITIES

Forum on the Promotion of Gender Equality August 26(Fri.)~28(Sun.), 2016

Themed “Towards a New Tomorrow: Creating a Society for Everyone,” this year’s forum was held from August 26 through 28, with the attendance of more than 1,000 individuals from throughout Japan. The Forum was convened to bring together pertinent government officials; representatives of women’s organizations, NPOs, universities and corporations; and participants from the public to share challenges relevant to the theme and consider solutions. It also sought to foster network building across organizations and fields.



Ms. Ryoko Akamatsu presenting a special lecture

In a special lecture entitled “30 Years After the Equal Employment Opportunity Act: a New Tomorrow – Thinking about Women’s Participation,” Ms. Ryoko Akamatsu (Chairperson, Japan Committee for UNICEF, formerly Director General of the Women's and Young Workers' Bureau at the Ministry of Labour, later renamed Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare) reflected on the path forged to achieve legislation, and discussed perspectives pertinent to enabling women to participate in various walks of life. Explaining the importance of women’s participation in politics in terms of ensuring women’s opinions are reflected in society and getting bills passed through the Diet, she stressed the need for introduction of a quota system.

Entitled “It’s Tough for Men Too! Reforming Men’s Ways of working and Work-life Balance,” the symposium focused on reform of working styles, and discussed matters pertinent to creating a society that enables both men and women to work and live comfortably. Explaining that the concept of families would change significantly over the next 20 years, Coordinator Dr. Michiko Miyamoto discussed the importance of eliminating current perceptions of gender-based roles from the perspective of family sociology. Panelist Mutsumi Ota, who was the first man to take childcare leave some 24 years ago, conveyed a message advocating the importance of creating a society that respects individual choice by relating his own experience. Speaking from the standpoint of andrology, Panelist Dr. Toshiyuki Tanaka addressed the

difficulty some people experience living, both mentally and physically, due to commonly held perceptions of masculinity. Stressing that having respect and tolerance for people with different values from ourselves would be necessary if we are to accept lifestyles that are not determined by gender, he added that diversity and work-life balance are not for the sole benefit of women: having men and women pool their ideas to create a comfortable society for everyone to live in leads to creation of a prosperous society.

The Forum also included workshops and a storytelling event featuring women storytellers organized by NWEC, and a variety of other workshops solicited nationwide addressing issues such as gender equality, training of women leaders, and support for DV victims. With numerous opportunities for participants to exchange information and network, one of the objectives of the forum, the three days of the Forum were filled with excitement.



Workshop: What's it like to work while raising children?



Workshop: Increasing women assembly members – both local and national!

Community-based Training Course to Promote Gender Equality for Leaders of Women's Facilities, Groups and Local Organizations, May 25(Wed.)~27(Fri.), 2016

Themed “Towards a society in which each and every woman can participate: Promoting women’s participation and reforming male-oriented work practices,” this year’s course was held from May 25 through 27, and was attended by 159 individuals from throughout Japan.



Keynote lecture: Mr. Kashima

In his keynote lecture, Mr. Takashi Kashima, President of the Japan Association for The Advancement of Working Women, commented on the process of formulating the 4th Basic Plan for Gender Equality based on reflections on what had transpired up until the 3rd Basic Plan for Gender Equality, and important points therein. He also discussed the relationship between “gender-equal perspectives” and the Act on the Promotion of Women’s Participation and Advancement in the Workplace and regional revitalization; reform of male-oriented work practices; and the direction of a society in which everyone is able to demonstrate their individuality and abilities of their own free will.

In another session, the Cabinet Office; Ministry of Education, Culture Sports, Science and Technology; Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare; and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries introduced various initiatives being pursued as they explained the latest national policies.

Ms. Noriko Sekine, Director of the Customer Division of Cybozu, Inc. joined PhD. Toru Anzai of Gunma Prefectural

Women's University, who researches work-life balance and social design, for a round-table discussion entitled "Considering Work Practice Reform from a Gender Equality Perspective" that was chaired by NWECC President Fusako Utsumi. With Ms. Sekine stressing the importance of being able to choose your own way of working, creating systems, and a work climate that values teamwork, and Prof. Anzai noting the importance of accepting diversity, and companies not demanding long working hours, the participants agreed that changing both men and women's work practices was essential.



Round-table talk: Mr. Anzai, Ms. Sekine and Pres. Utsumi

The latter half of the training course included two workshops divided by theme and course that were designed to enhance participants' practical skills. In the theme-specific workshop, participants from different workplaces gathered to engage in group work under three different themes. In the course-specific workshop, participants engaged in group work based on reports of best practices collected from throughout Japan. These reports addressed new initiatives to promote women's participation and the interdisciplinary collaboration being undertaken at women's centers, and regional efforts to revitalize organizations. The workshops afforded ample opportunities for participants to exchange information that could be put to use upon their return.



Workshop

The plenary session confirmed that collaboration between different sectors can be expected to afford new insights and synergistic effects; and that a high level and quantity of collaboration, information dissemination, ways of sharing information, and mutual understanding were all important because women's participation was on the rise. Feedback from participants included comments such as "The course contributed to my general understanding of everything from the directions of policies to concrete practices." and "I learned more about the 4th Basic Plan and realized the direction in which I should deal with issues."

Training Course for Counselors at Women's Facilities, June 22(Wed.)~24(Fri.), 2016

Social change has caused men and women's concerns to become increasingly complex and diverse. This course aimed to enhance counselors' expertise and enable them to respond appropriately to such concerns from a gender-equal standpoint, as well as to improve the quality of counseling services in general. Held over the two-night/three-day period June 22 through 24, it was attended by a total of 105 individuals from gender equality centers, Spousal Violence Counseling and Support Center, civil groups, and companies.



Ms. Yumiko Kageyama,

On the first day, Ms. Yumiko Kageyama, Former manager of counseling section of Nagoya City Gender Equality Promotion Center & Women's Center, clarified the importance of viewing women seeking counsel not as a wife or mother, but as "individual," and simply providing the psychological and social support necessary for them to handle their problems themselves. She also talked about the meaning and role of counseling for women from the standpoint of

their empowerment.



Information session “Overview of Stalker Cases and Hints for Damage Prevention”

The three-day course also included lectures and information sessions by individuals such as lawyers, the Saitama Prefectural Police, the Kashiwa City Board of Education, and clinical psychologists. Participants learned about issues fundamental to counseling services such as necessary legal knowledge; prevention of PTSD and other psychological care; prevention of burn-out among counselors themselves; organizational management and building of systems for collaboration; as well as the latest information about the situation surrounding problems facing young people arising from social networking services (SNS) and how to deal with them; and hints on preventing incidents involving stalking.

One of the features of this course is that it comprises not only lectures but also workshops and practical skill training. This enables participants to learn both theory and practice, which in turn fosters networking among course participants.

In Workshop 1 on the second day, participants deepened their understanding of real-life situations and methods of dealing with them by engaging in group discussions to assess and work out how to deal with people seeking counsel on problems such as challenging human relationships or DV; and participating in role-plays modeled after actual counseling situations.

Workshop 2 was divided into and developed in line with three themes: collaboration with educational institutions; counseling for men; and self-help and peer-guidance groups. Participants listened to reports from each center and shared information on issues they face, such as how much outreach, etc. was appropriate; what was needed for preventative awareness raising; organizational management and how to collaborate with other institutions. They also sought insight by exchanging opinions on ways of resolving such issues.



Workshop “Support for Self-help and peer-guidance Groups”

In an optional “Tapping Touch” experiential program, participants attempted tapping each other’s shoulders and backs to relieve their fatigue from the course and daily stress, and experienced other methods of relaxation and refreshment useful in counseling situations.

Feedback in participant questionnaires included comments such as “The lectures addressed things constantly concern me when providing support” and “I got a lot of information and knowledge that will inform my counseling moving forward while deepening exchange with participants from other institutions.”

Summer School for High and Junior High School Girls, August 6(Sat.)~8(Mon.), 2016

NWEC has held its Summer School for High and Junior High School Girls program since 2005 as a means of supporting school girls choosing to pursue the sciences. The program targets third-year junior high and first through third-year senior high and national college of technology students with an interest in science and technology. NWEC also offers a parallel course for parents and teachers who have a significant influence on students when they are deliberating what course of study to pursue.

This year's Summer School, the 12th of its kind, was held over the two-night/three-day period from August 6 through August 8, with the participation of a total of 115 girls and 27 parents and teachers from throughout Japan.

Commissioned by the Japan Science and Technology Agency through its Support for Female Students in Choosing Science Courses Program, the Summer School was co-hosted by the Working Group on Gender Equality for the Committee for the Science Community, Science Council of Japan, with sponsorship from the Japan Inter-Society Liaison Association Committee for Promoting Equal Participation of Men and Women in Science and Engineering, and the support of numerous organizations including Ochanomizu University, Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology Graduate University, the Saitama Prefecture Board of Education, and the Chiba Prefecture Board of Education. The number of staff in attendance during the program exceeded 280.

The program for school girls comprised career lectures by women already working in science and technology fields; 16 courses of experiments and practical work; poster sessions by 37 organizations such as academic societies and corporations; and international exchange with international students.



Poster exhibitions and career guidance

University students also prepared various activities including an ice breaking activity "Science Battle" and a science career game experience. The student activities organized by the student TAs (teaching assistants) were elaborated and clearly conveyed their hope that the school girls would advance into the sciences.

The program for parents and teachers included lectures by teachers and university students who are role models for the school girls, a round-table talk between researchers and engineers working at universities and corporations, and TA. Lively discussion ensued throughout and participants' enthusiasm for supporting school girls' advance into the sciences was unquestionable.

Feedback included many forward-looking comments such as "Participating in the Summer School and considering things from various angles helped me to realize the wide variety of options available. I would like to study both the sciences and humanities. I've become more positive about my future and would like to expand my potential." "The Summer School was a good opportunity for me to think concretely about my future. I would like to become a student TA and participate again." and "I thought there was only one way to follow my path of choice, but I learned I was mistaken. I was able to talk about and resolve some of the things I was worried or uncertain about."



Students interacting with international student TA



Group photo of students with the student TA

The Women's Archives Center Exhibition, January 15(Fri.)~July 24(Sun.), 2016

Entitled “30 Years from Enactment of the Equal Employment Opportunity Act,” this year’s exhibition was held in the Women's Archives Center’s exhibition room from January 15 through July 24, 2016.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Act was enacted in 1985 and has been in force since 1986. The exhibition featured panels following the path taken by various people – both government officials and regular citizens – over a period of more than 30 years with the aim of realizing working careers free of gender discrimination, and explains prevalent social trends around the time of enactment and subsequent revisions to the law. Other exhibits include books, magazines, newspaper articles, records related to the bill, and precious photographs from the Center’s collection.



Exterior view of the exhibition room



Interior view of the exhibition room

Owing to its popularity, a smaller version of the exhibition was relocated to the lobby in front of the Information Center for Women’s Education, where it remains on display.

An Equal Employment Opportunity Act board game (Japanese version only) was created and distributed free of charge in the exhibition room as well as at NWEAC events, and was made downloadable via the internet. This game also caught the attention of staff at other institutions and was distributed free of charge at a number of gender equality centers.



Exhibition Poster

Launch of an Online Course in Partnership with the Open University of Japan, April, 2016

NWEAC launched an online course in April 2016 which was produced in partnership with the Open University of Japan.

The Open University of Japan was established based on the Law Permitting Establishment of the University of the Air Foundation (the English name was subsequently changed) as a lifelong learning institution with a mandate to offer opportunity for a university education to a broad spectrum of society. More than 90,000 people throughout Japan – people of a wide variety of ages and occupations, but predominantly those in their 30s and 40s – are currently studying university education through means such as radio and television broadcasts.

The “Introduction to Women’s Career Design” course that NWEC has been involved in creating is a new type of online course that the Open University has launched via the internet. Given women’s diversifying lifestyles, the course aims to provide women confused or uncertain about their jobs and their futures with the basic knowledge needed to plan their career paths independently. The course requires learners to view videos and web-based case studies of women of various ages active in various fields, and contemplate the situation surrounding women in contemporary society and the social background. Learners to study statistics pertinent to women’s careers and ICT skills to search for useful materials and information, and acquire basic legal literacy in agreements and legislation such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Equal Employment Opportunity Act. Learners will also learn about a work-life balance, what gender equality means for men, and diversity. Learners will also design their own careers as they participate in online lectures and short tests on lifestyles and workstyles, online discussions with other students, and write essays.

This year, the course was provided in both first and second semester. Because participants can proceed with their studies at their own pace, it is suitable for a variety of people including working women raising children, working single women, women who are already in established careers but who are thinking about life after retirement, men with female subordinates, and men whose wives have taken childcare leave. Feedback from participants included comments such as “Learning about various women’s lives and choices proved a good opportunity for me to think about my own future career,” “It was great to be able to engage in information exchange with other participants, something that hadn’t been possible hereto with radio and TV-based courses,” and “I learned where I can get information pertinent to women’s career.

INFORMATION FROM NWEC

Publication of “A Practical Guidebook for the Promotion of Regional Women's Activities – New Cooperation and Roles for local governments and Gender Equality Centers”(Japanese only)

NWEC has compiled and published a useful guidebook based on the results of a FY2015 survey of women’s facilities.

Promotion of women’s participation has been addressed by ministries and agencies, local public entities, gender equality centers and other organizations in recent years as an important policy issue in terms of building a sustainable society. Such initiatives span a variety of fields, so it is essential that we build systems for regional collaboration among fields such as industry and economics, and labor. This study focused on such partnerships, and used surveys of local governments public entities and gender equality centers to gain an understanding of the situation at hand, and qualitative research for good practices. It then considered issues pertinent to effective measures, partnership policies, and means of advancing gender-equality. The



Guidebook has been put together in such a way as to make it easy to use in practice, and summarizes trends in policies to promote women's participation; roles local governments and gender-equal centers are expected to fulfil; and means of collaboration that support effective initiatives. In order to describe the situation prevalent in each area in Japan, the Guidebook uses area-specific data for factors such as population change, women's employment rates, birthrates, and perceptions of gender-based role-sharing, to color code maps of Japan and present an overview of the current situation. It also describes many case studies in which economic organizations build networks with local governments to address issues in various fields such as initiatives to change male executives' perceptions, train women leaders to work in corporations, support entrepreneurship, support reemployment, promote gender equality in local communities, and promote women's participation in fishing and agriculture.

Publication of “Report on a Survey of Men and Women’s Initial Career Development and Promotion of their Participation”(Japanese only)

This report has been published as a part of our Research on Perceptions and Support for Young Men and Women’s Career Development, which has been ongoing since FY2014 with the aim of “devising measures to provide early support for career development with a lifelong outlook from a gender-equal perspective.”



The importance of the work environment facing new graduates, or “initial career phase,” is demanding attention as an aspect that influences later career development. In terms of heightening women’s career awareness in particular, the report identifies the importance of women (in their 20s) maturing professionally and gaining experience before they are restricted by childbirth and child-raising. However, there is a paucity of empirical research on the perceptions and behavior of men and women early in their careers. Accordingly, in 2015, NWECC conducted a five-year follow-up study of regular male and female employees in private-sector companies to verify “changes in career perceptions” and “factors instigating change” among men and women in the initial career phase.

The study was unable to verify precisely what kind of factors bring about changes in people’s career awareness and exactly how much such awareness changes. This is because, in Japan, we have analyzed and interpreted data predominantly on the basis of data on people’s perceptions that was collected at a fixed point in time. However, it is difficult for such one-off surveys to clarify either “changes in perceptions” or “factors instigating changes.” To address this issue, we need a panel survey of the same people to be conducted at different points in time to be able to appropriately identify changes on a personal level.

This report analyzes the results of the first survey conducted in October 2015 separately for men and women, and compares them to career perceptions held by men and women in their first year of employment.

A second follow-up survey, which inquired into perceptions held among employees in their second year with a company, was conducted in October 2016.