

Yamamoto left her husband with her two children six years ago and had to move in with her aged father, who shares the rent and looks after her middle school-age children until she returns home after work close to midnight during the week.

Her husband, she explains, paid child support for about a year, but the payments stopped coming after he remarried.

Japanese divorce laws are technically easy, requiring both parties to sign a divorce document that is registered in the local city office. Child support is decided at the family courts.

In 2002, more than 292,000 couples parted ways, roughly twice the number in 1980. Almost 90 percent of divorces are settled out of court.

Local reports say that the Japanese divorce rate of 2.27 percent is lower than the U.S.' 5.1 percent, but women in the United States get a better deal because of laws that require husbands to pay child and financial support and because of easier chances of remarriage there.

In Japan, being a divorcee can lead to discrimination as they are often perceived of as irresponsible or easy, some women say. Often too, especially in the rural areas, the fear of not having financial means, the desire to keep the family together for the children's sake and the perception that women should not complain prod

many to stay on in unhappy marriages.

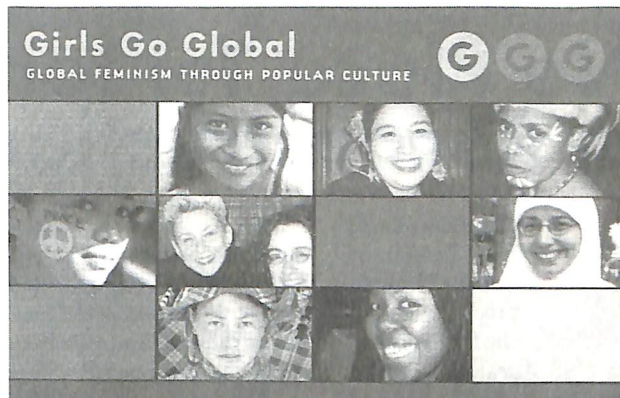
Nagashima relates how, when she wrote down "divorced" in her resume, she was not able to get work. When she did get a job, some male officemates thought she was an easy woman after they found out she was divorced. Worse, she says, a manager in her company suggested that she could make money by working in the entertainment industry.

But Hiromi Ikeuchi, a marital counsellor, and head of Tokyo Family Rapport, adds that while often it is the women who find themselves in difficulties after divorce—the men too have their own problems, especially those who want to continue to see their children.

"My work has shown that men usually suffer emotionally as well, since in the majority of divorce cases their wives are granted child custody. Against this backdrop, there must be more work done to raise consciousness on divorce, rather than only new laws on child support," she says.

Ikeuchi says child support must also accompany visitation rights. Husbands and wives must learn to accept that divorce also concerns the issue of children's rights, a new concept in Japanese society where mothers use child support as a bargaining chip for visitation rights for fathers.

Source: Inter Press Service, 27 May 2003, <<http://www.ips.org>>.



## Girls Go Global: How do you see Global Feminism?

The "Girls Go Global" project is an international initiative to bring together contemporary and pop culture images of global feminism from women and girls across the globe. Women and girls are encouraged to send essays (not more than 3,000 words), photos, art, web images, lyrics, poems, graffiti, and multimedia depictions of feminism to be a part of a global collection for publication and possible exhibition.

The project wants to demystify feminism and promote a positive and engaging connection with the term. The ultimate goal is a creative book produced by feminist activists on their own terms and design. It will be compiled and reviewed by a panel of international experts.

"Girls Go Global" aims to provide a funky source of literature that invites people to become a part of the global women's movement(s) that will be portrayed as a talented and inspiring bunch of women from around the world, and equipped with different views and skills, working together for justice. Project organisers are hoping that the outcomes will provide a context that values and celebrates non-conventional and non-academic forms of expression of feminism(s) coming from women across age, culture and background.

"Girls Go Global" received initial funding from the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) and the Ford Foundation, but requires additional funding and assistance. The project is an initiative of a group of global feminists and is run by a voluntary Advisory Group.

For more information on this project, please contact: Suzette Mitchell, E-mail: <[suzetemitchell2002@yahoo.com](mailto:suzetemitchell2002@yahoo.com)> or <[suzette@girlsgoglobal.org](mailto:suzette@girlsgoglobal.org)>, Website: <<http://www.girlsgoglobal.org>>.