

Job Equality Elusive for Women

Although women are entering the workforce in unprecedented numbers, they still face higher unemployment rates, lower wages and barriers to entering high-level positions. According to "Global Employment Trends for Women 2004," an analysis of female employment, about 200 million women joined the work force in the past decade. However, equal pay, balanced benefits and true socio-economic empowerment for women have not been achieved.

The gap between the number of employed men and women has been decreasing across the globe, but at widely different rates. For example, only 40 women per 100 men are economically active in the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia. Women also make up a greater percentage of the working poor. Sixty percent of people earning less than one dollar a day are women. "Creating enough decent jobs for women is only possible if policy-makers place employment at the centre of social and economic policies, and recognize that women face more substantial challenges in the work place than men," said International Labour Organisation (ILO) Director General Juan Somavia. "Raising incomes and opportunities for women lifts whole families out of poverty and drives economic and social progress."

The second report, "Breaking Through the Glass Ceiling: Women in Management—Update 2004," reports that the number of women holding managerial positions increased by just 0.7 percent between 1996 and 1999, and between 2000 and 2002, while women's share of managerial positions in 60 countries studied ranged from 20 to 42 percent. Women tend to hold more professional jobs in North America, South America and Eastern Europe than in East Asia, South Asia and the Middle East. But regardless of region, it was universally more difficult for women to rise to the top. The report highlights one exception: a large percentage of women hold high-level jobs in legal systems in some countries, particularly in Eastern Europe.

Source: UN Wire, 5 March 2004, <http://www.unwire.org/News/328_426_13758.asp>

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after work hours, on the basis of observing neutrality, was 21 years ago.

Yet another case that stirred Japan was the resignation in April last year of a former ambassador, Naoki Amaki, who publicly opposed Japan's sending SDF troops to Iraq.

In his immensely popular book *So Long, Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, released in October 2003, Amaki accuses the government of virtually firing him because he expressed an opinion against government policy.

Ishizuka suggests that terrorism is leading to a dangerous situation for political and human rights activism as the government beefs up its call not to show "weakness against terrorism."

He worries about the support this tension could bring to proposals by the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) to change Japan's Constitution, which prohibits military involvement overseas. Of particular focus is Article 9, under which the country renounces war.

Constitutional reform is planned for 2007. The conservative LDP is calling for new laws to legalise the dispatch of the SDF to support the US war on terrorism in the future.

"In the face of a terrorist attack, people would be more inclined to support a militarily active Japan. This would be disastrous for activists who face the danger of being arrested for simply demanding their rights," he says.

Source: Inter Press Service, <<http://www.ipsnews.net>>, 2 April 2004

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"We explain to young people how to use contraceptives, how to avoid getting pregnant unnecessarily and how to manage family planning," said Gulnara Kadyrova, a project coordinator for UNFPA.

The National Red Crescent Society of Kyrgyzstan is also contributing to efforts to deal with the issue. "We recently opened an anonymous counselling centre where we will provide help for girls with abortion problems," said Natalya Bibikova, the Red Crescent Society's Bishkek coordinator.

Source: <http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=40421&SelectRegion=Central_Asia&SelectCountry=KYRGYZSTAN>, 5 April 2004