

## Women in Developing Countries

To reduce the proportion of people who suffer from hunger to half of the 1990's levels by 2015 is one of the Millennium Development Goals that was adopted in the United Nation in 2000.

Indeed, the poverty rate in developing countries decreased and the goal was achieved. However, many developing countries are still suffering from poverty. Even national poverty is solved, women's poverty; late advancement in society has become more apparent. I chose this topic because I think if women can advance in society and get jobs that earn as much as men do, social status between men and women will disappear and the poverty in the whole country will improve.

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The hypothesis is that women in developing countries are under a bad condition because of the traditional customs, historical background and society's current condition. I chose Afghanistan and Norway according to the human development index and the working women to men rate to compare these three.

First, I'll talk about Afghanistan. Afghanistan is a typical developing country and there is a big gap in the working rate between the two genders. What made this gap?

One reason is the invasion by the Soviet Union. This invasion had a character of a religious war and was called for a "jihad" meaning holy war to eliminate invaders. It came to an end because the Soviet Union retreated from Afghanistan in 1988 and the Soviet Union itself broke up in 1991. This led to the Afghanistan war and made Taliban.

The Taliban largely ruled the whole of Afghanistan by 1996. Their restrictions were very strict, especially to women. Then, women were treated as tools to make children and slaves to do the housework. This tendency is still seen even though the Taliban broke up in 2001.

Look at this picture. This is the burqa. Women were forced to wear it then when they go out. As you can see, it covers from the top of the head to the toes.

Another reason is the difficult conditions under which women are right now. These are the examples. These are combined with the Islamic traditions and the historical backgrounds of Afghanistan and shape the society that separates women and men. On the other hand, the rate of women members in Afghan Diet is increasing, and now, it is higher than that of Japan.

Second, I'll talk about Norway. Norway is much developed compared to Afghanistan and the gender equality is almost achieved in working situation. However, this wasn't accomplished from the very beginning. Then, what caused Norway to fulfill it?

The answer to this question is the establishment of Basic Law for the Gender Equality. From then, many laws that are based on this law have been put into effect.

Also, the Association for Gender Equality was established influenced by the feminism in the 1970's. Now, this association supports developing countries feminisms. However, there still

remain problems in Norway, such as the wage gaps between women and men.

In Afghanistan, traditions, the historical background, and the society that separates women and men placed women in a low social position. However, as we can see in the tendency of Diet members, women's social position is rising. In Norway, women actively started the liberation movement and many laws have been put into effect. Moreover, men have been accepting them. This has led to gender equality accomplishment. On the other hand, there are remaining issues such as wage gaps and the difference in types of work.

I once had a chance to talk with a female student from Uzbekistan, an Islamic country adjacent to Afghanistan in APU. I asked her what we could do to encourage women in developing countries to work like men. She said, "In my country, women take pride in housework and childcare. I have never thought that it is unequal." I was very shocked when I heard these words. Therefore, I think even though the effective systems in Norway were introduced to Afghanistan, it won't work out well. This means that the poverty problem in developing countries can't be solved just by imitating other countries.

To solve the poverty problem in developing countries, I think that we need to stop having bias against religion and tradition. We have to consider them first and then find out original ways to solve poverty. Also, at the same time, women should be given chances to work and earn money. We Japanese people are secular. I think there must be something that we can only do to solve the poverty in developing countries.