

## **Seminar Report: “Towards a better future for women and work: Voices of women and men”**

Tokyo, 22 March 2017

### **Background and Summary**

A special event took place in Tokyo on 22 March 2017 to introduce the survey findings from the ILO-Gallup report “Towards a better future for women and work: Voices of women and men.” The event was organized jointly by the ILO and Gallup following the global launch of the report that took place in Washington, DC on 8 March 2017.

Around 150 participants representing the government, trade unions, companies, academia, and civil society joined. Survey findings, obtained in a global poll with first-hand data from 149,000 men and women in over 140 countries, were presented by Susan Maybud, Senior Gender Specialist from the ILO in Geneva who coordinated the publication of the report in collaboration with Gallup. Findings from Japan were also presented with comparative perspectives vis-à-vis global and regional findings. Other speakers and panellists, including Joni Simpson, Senior Gender Specialist with the ILO Decent Work Technical Team for East and South-east Asia and the Pacific, as well as representatives from the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare, OECD, Multi-national enterprises (MNEs) and trade unions introduced challenges, initiatives, and best practices in promoting gender equality and women’s participation and advancement in the workplace. The panel discussions involved the active participation and engagement of the audience, who were knowledgeable on the issues, asked many layered questions and exchanged ideas and opinions among the speakers and the audience. Proceedings of the seminar were facilitated by **Master of Ceremony, Kenichi Kumagai, Project Planning Committee Member, The Japan Association for Advancement of ILO Activities.**

### **Some of the key messages of the seminar were:**

- Japan has one of the highest rate of acceptance for women to work outside the home (92 percent of men and 94 percent of women)
- Overwhelming both women (76 percent) and men (79 percent) in Japan prefer for women to be working at paid jobs outside the home.
- Japan is currently at a point where it is no longer a choice to include women in the workplace but it is also necessary for economic growth and tackling demographic issues
- The identification of work-family balance and affordable care as main obstacles for working women is the flip side of work culture of long work hours, in particular for men
- Key in putting all this into action includes; conducive environment for men and women to utilize instruments available (e.g. childcare leave), presence of peer support, and addressing issues of gender pay gap, long work hours, and lack of women in leadership positions

Presentations of the speakers and panelists can be located on the event page of the website for ILO Office for Japan ([http://www.ilo.org/tokyo/information/pr/WCMS\\_544090/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/tokyo/information/pr/WCMS_544090/lang--en/index.htm))

## **Opening Remarks**

In her opening remarks, **Akiko Taguchi, Director ILO Office for Japan** welcomed the audience and the speakers, and stressed that the promotion of gender equality has been central in the mandate of ILO since its establishment in 1919. It is a critical part of decent work agenda as well as ILO's Centenary Initiatives as "Women at Work Initiative." **Larry Emond, Gallup Managing Partner** stated that he is optimistic that a great deal of progress will be made in promoting gender equality in Japan, and expressed Gallup's commitment to continue to support the issue. Active discussions among the speakers and the participants were welcomed, and the speakers wished that this seminar will make contributions to working women in Japan.

## **Presentation of Findings**

**Susan Maybud, Senior Gender Specialist, Gender, Equality, and Diversity Branch of the ILO in Geneva** delivered the presentation of key findings. The report clearly indicates that globally, most women prefer to be working and that the majority of men agree. At total of 70 percent of women (76 percent for women in Japan) and 66 percent of men (79 percent for men in Japan) would prefer that women work at paid job. Women in Japan would prefer to be either working at paid jobs (20 percent) or be in situations in which they could both work and take care of their families (56 percent). In addition, in Japan, most men (92 percent) and women (94 percent) find it perfectly acceptable for women in their families to have a paid job outside of the home. This is far above the world average of 77 percent for men and 83 percent for women. As far as the challenges, when the biggest challenges for women in paid jobs are grouped, they are all part of the same issue of work and family. This is similar in Japan where the biggest challenge is work and family balance and the second is affordable care. The survey reveals that men and women share similar positive views for women to have paid jobs outside of family, which has important implications for policy-making as there is agreement at the household level. However, for Japan, there are structural barriers to be removed. Japan is currently at a point where it is no longer a choice to include women in the workplace but it is also necessary for economic growth. It is time to sweep away the old economic models, and replace them with family friendly provisions. Survey results show that Japan is well placed to truly transform its society.

## **Speakers**

**Masashi Ishida, Deputy Director, Equal Employment Policy Division, Equal Employment, Children and Families Bureau, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare** spoke about how through legal framework to promote active participation of women at workplace and support work-family balance over the last few decades, particularly in the recent years, women's participation has very slowly but gradually improved. However, he emphasized that while there is legal and structural framework for supporting work-family balance, these instruments are not utilized as the environment and peer and supervisor pressure at workplace are not conducive to using them. For example, the rate of men to take childcare leave in 2015 was 2.65 percent. Rather than only pushing for increased recruitment of women and increase in the ratio of women in management positions, more effective way would also include the promotion of men to participate in childcare and work style reform by the companies. First, the ministry itself has to change to encourage others in the country to change. With this belief, Mr. Ishida has led a group of young people (age 25 – 35) who carry out initiatives to promote an enabling environment at work, to take childcare leave and other policies to promote work-family

balance. He showed a short video clip to the audience on these initiatives with examples of supervisors in the ministry declaring concrete ways to show their support to their subordinates in childcare, nursing care, and work-life balance.

**Yumiko Murakami, Head, OECD Tokyo Centre** began by highlighting that the concept of womenomics (what is needed for economic growth in Japan is to promote greater role of women in the workplace) first introduced in 1999 is now finally gaining traction. This is because the inclusion of women is now regarded not as social policy but as key to economic growth. OECD also treats gender issues as economic issues. Gender is a multi-dimensional issue involving various issues such as health, education, public governance, employment and taxation and the solution would also require a multi-dimensional approach. She showed data on various challenges in Japan in terms of achieving gender equality (remuneration for women only 70 percent of men, harder access to credit and financing for women, etc.). At the same time, OECD research and data show that having more representation of women in the parliament leads to less pay gap between men and women, and having more women in the cabinet leads to increased trust of the citizens towards the government. Representation of women at the leadership level contributes to government stability and to decreasing the gender gap in economic status.

During the **Questions and Answers session** following the presentations, one participant expressed surprise that there are similar challenges in Japan and Europe. **Susan Maybud** responded that the challenge of work-family balance is a global rights-based challenge. However, some countries (such as the Nordic countries) do a better job of making a business case and dealing with issues of including women in the workplace. Another comment from the floor raised the importance of looking at not only regular workers but also non-regular workers when collecting and monitoring data such as women's labour force participation rate by age group and number of hours worked.

### **Panel Discussion on Engaging Women in the Workplace**

**The Moderator, Asako Osaki, Director, Gender Action Platform** recapped the main themes of the presentations, and introduced key topics of the panel discussions. The critical role of women in economic growth is commonly acknowledged globally, and in Japan women's participation and work-family balance are central to the new three policy pillars of the Abe administration. Initiatives for gender equality and decent work that ILO promotes should be considered as some of the specific measures in achieving and maintaining economic growth as well as fair distribution of its benefits. The global surveys conducted by the ILO and Gallup are unique in that they are based on subjective perceptions of individuals. Thus, it is critical to analyze and draw on what the survey indicate and their implications. The Panel discussions aim to do this particularly focusing on issues in the workplace.

#### **Discussants**

**Hiroko Furuya, Senior Consultant, Gallup** introduced data on the low percentage of managers who are female (at any level) in Japan (11 percent) compared to the global average (43 percent). She also shared Gallup data on the low levels of employee engagement<sup>1</sup> in Japan (6 percent) compared to the global average of 15 percent. Therefore the customary and excessively long working hours in Japan,

---

<sup>1</sup> Gallup defines employee engagement as a workplace approach resulting in the right conditions for all members of an organisation to give of their best each day, committed to their organisation's goals and values, motivated to contribute to organisational success, with an enhanced sense of their own well-being.

especially for men, do not seem to be leading to higher levels of engagement or innovation. Other Gallup data points to the fact that higher levels of diversity and engagement in the workplace lead to higher revenues and higher net profit. In order to create an enabling workplace, some key measures are centered on respecting diversity and investing in staff development and growth.

**Noriko Liu, Regional Vice President of Brand and Field Marketing, Asia Pacific at Hyatt Hotels Corporation** shared how Hyatt values its employee diversity, development and growth. She introduced the company's higher purpose, core values and leadership profiles, and showcased executed examples of how Hyatt takes care of its employees in the same way as it does its customers, its owners and communities. Such an environment presents opportunities to women – one of the interviewees from Park Hyatt Tokyo mentioned in the video that she is fortunate to be working there as she wants to be with her small children at home longer, while staying connected to the larger society that Hyatt provides for her. Hyatt positively encourages professional growth and advancement both for women and men through providing opportunities and encouraging its employees to experience jobs in different departments. **Hiroko Noguchi, General Manager of Hyatt Regency Hakone Resort & Spa** shared stories of female employees at Hyatt Hakone who are able to balance work and family due to the enabling environment Hyatt creates.

### **Panel Discussions & Interactive Comments and Questions from the Floor**

On the question from the floor, whether Hyatt's high employee engagement rate (Engaged/Actively Disengaged) (4:1) is both for regular workers and non-regular workers, Hyatt representatives responded that the 4:1 engagement rate at Hyatt is for regular workers. There was another question and comment on how the good example shown by Hyatt can be reciprocated in other places, particularly by small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs). In Japan, it is hard to advocate womenomics because not many women are in managerial positions, so when the supervisors themselves do not take parental leave, it is difficult for their subordinates to do so. It is not because of the lack of policies and advocacy but the lack of enabling environment and incentives. On these points, Susan Maybud shared that the ILO conducted a study on maternity protection in SMEs, which demonstrated that SMEs also provide maternity leave. However regardless of size, for companies to be successful, the family-friendly initiatives have to be accompanied by the good will of management, as showcased by the Hyatt.

### **Discussants**

**Kumie Inoue, Executive Director, Department of Equality, JTUC-RENGO** offered insights from data on some of the main issues and challenges including long work hours and gender pay gaps. The reasons that the gap in remuneration (level of remuneration for women is 71 percent of men) are attributed to the lower number of working years and lower percentage of women in management positions. It is estimated that if these are corrected the level of remuneration for women would be 88 percent of men. In the World Economic Forum (WEF) global gender gap index of 2016, Japan was at 111<sup>th</sup> place out of 144 countries, which is 10 places worse than the previous year. There have been many policies introduced over the years, but still there are few female parliamentarians and managers. WEF estimates that at this pace, it will take 170 years for Japan to achieve gender equality. One of the main goals of RENG0's 4<sup>th</sup> Action Plan for Gender Equality is to have women account for 30 percent of its board members. This is based on the data that organizations with more than 2 female board members are more likely to be carrying out initiatives for gender equality and work-life balance, and to have higher rates of having policies for addressing gender pay gaps and having analyses of the status and reasons for this gap (as well as policies and analyses on regular and non-regular workers).

**Joni Simpson, Senior Specialist, Gender, Equality and Non-Discrimination, ILO DWT for East and South-East Asia and the Pacific** reflected that most programs for supporting private sector development are for big corporations, but most jobs are created in SMEs that struggle with complying to labour laws and need support. A recent ILO report by Employers identified the top barrier to women's leadership as work and family balance, which bodes well since Employers also see this as a top priority. On economic benefits for gender equality, an ILO estimate shows that a greater gender equality could increase the GDP in Asia and the Pacific in 2030 by between 2.7 and 4.7 percent. Although women manage 30 percent of businesses in Asia, their businesses are mainly micro and small enterprises. ILO research shows that most entrepreneurship promotion programs don't address gender issues and merely target women, which may lead to less impact for their business. There are programs to help women to get into business, but more needs to be done to help women to access growth sectors and to finance and grow their businesses. Ongoing initiatives such as supplier diversification, women's entrepreneurship training and support, capital for women-led business through Angel investors, and sponsoring contests, conferences, and research would be helpful to assist women-led businesses to grow. More information on ILO's Women's entrepreneurship program, guidance and tools can be found at [www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org).

### **Panel Discussions & Interactive Comments and Questions from the Floor**

There was a question from the floor, if there has been research on whether performance evaluations for men and women are conducted in a consistent manner. Ms. Inoue of RENGO emphasized that there should have been a requirement for information on the remuneration gap between men and women as part of the situational analysis for the development of action plan for the Act on Promotion of Women's Participation and Advancement in the Workplace. Women often are not promoted because they are frequently rated in the middle range. **Susan Maybud** pointed out that the ILO Global Wage Report elaborates on the explained gaps (number of years of education, experience, etc.), and unexplained gaps (purely discriminatory practices). The ILO also has a guide on gender-neutral job evaluation for equal pay.

On the question of whether it would be appropriate to cut remuneration of men in order to increase pay for women, **Kumie Inoue** responded that RENGO believes in fair and balanced work styles, tax and welfare systems, and benefits, and thus, remuneration of a certain group should not decrease in order to increase remuneration of another. There was also a question that perhaps, the decline in labour force participation for women in Asia is not something to be alarmed about, as it could mean that now economically women do not necessarily have to work, but have a choice to rely on men to work. Joni Simpson pointed that seeing the decline is worrying, and it does not go along with what women as well as men want, as reinforced in the ILO-Gallup survey findings.

Finally, a comment was made from the floor that there has been a shift over the last couple of decades and now both women and men have positive views for women to have paid work in order to support the economy at the household as well as the national level. However, unless the social system, conscious behavior and norms change, and if the focus is only on paid work, there could be negative repercussions for women as experienced between 1985 and 1995 when the number of work hours (paid and unpaid work) increased for women. Susan Maybud responded that if women do not participate in the workplace, both women as well as the society and economy lose from that, and as women become more confident and men and the society start to understand, the situation gradually improves for the next generation.

## **Concluding Comments from ILO**

**Susan Maybud** commended the sense of partnership and good will among all the participants at the seminar on the issue of promoting women's empowerment and gender equality. Unlike many places in the world, where much of the discussions starts with justifications and defensiveness, in Japan, there was a willingness to have an honest look and the issue is being recognized. As shown by the survey findings, at individual household level, men and women agree on women having paid work, and there is high acceptance for women to have paid jobs outside of the home. To put all of this into action, the challenge really is in the work environment. A supportive environment, the presence or absence of peer support and a supportive and conducive environment for men and women to utilize instruments available (e.g. childcare leave) makes a difference. Finally, it will take time and require vigilance to prevent gender regression, and that needs to start and continue with good will, as demonstrated through presentations by speakers and panelists.

## **Closing Remarks**

**Aiko Kimura, President, The Japan Association for Advancement of ILO Activities** gave a brief recap of the key messages of the speakers, and thanked the audience for thoughtful and complex comments and questions. She emphasized the need to tackle the critical issues of gender pay gap and long work hours that are preventing decent work and decent life for men and women in Japan. She expressed her strong wishes that this seminar will contribute to achieving decent work for all, and asked assistance and cooperation of all the participants to ILO's activities towards this goal.