

2013年9月8日に、日本から代表藤掛と数名の事務局員、海外実践研修参加者が、当団体が建設支援を行ったパラグアイ共和国カアグアス県サンホアキン市キンタイ小学校の開校式に参加しました。当日は雲ひとつ無い晴天の中、校長先生や全教員、小学生も参加し、一つ一つの教室を回りながら、「どの様な勉強をしたいか」、「友だちとたくさん遊びたいんだ」等の小学生の夢を聞かせてくれました。



翌9月9日には、日本からは同じ参加者が列席する中、当団体が建設支援を行ったパラグアイ共和国カアグアス県コロネルオビエド市メルセデス小学校の開校式に参加しました。この学校では、伝統的な衣装に身を包んだ小学生たちが歓迎の踊りを披露してくれたり、小学生による感謝のスピーチ等も行われました。開校式は、藤掛代表と校長先生との間で無事執り行われました。

藤掛代表よりメッセージ:

途上国における教育の不十分さ、地方や農村部ほど女性の地位が低いという現実、徹底した現場主義＝フィールドワークを貫いており、対象地域の人々の視点に立った活動を展開しております。

そして現在は主にパラグアイにおいて学校建設や教育支援活動等を行うとともに、これらの活動を通じ日本国内においても「ジェンダーに配慮した国際協力」を学ぶことの大切さも届けていきたいと思っています。

今後もパラグアイのみならず、他地域での活動も展開していきたいと考えています。そしてこの度2013年のパラグアイ学校建設に際し、若林美代名誉校長先生に多大なるご尽力を頂きました。



若林美代名誉校長プロフィール

昭和 8年 京都市下京区にて出生
昭和29年 京都学芸大学(現京都教育大学)英文学科卒
昭和29年 京都市立大内小学校に勤務
昭和35年 京都市立藤森中学校に英語教諭として勤務
昭和61年 京都市立弥栄中学校に勤務
昭和63年 京都市立桃陵中学校教頭に昇任
平成 4年 京都市立桃陵中学校 第14代校長に昇任
平成 6年 定年退職



基金は、より広く有志より基金を募り、パラグアイの農村部の子どもたちの教育や保健・衛生状況のさらなる向上を目指した活動を展開していきたいと考えております。

これからはみなさまとともに、現地で活動する彼ら、彼女らとゆるやかなでしなやかなネットワークを維持しつつ、活動を続けて参りたいと考える次第です。

皆様方のハートをほんのわずかで結構です。パラグアイの農村で暮らす人々や子どもたちに向けていただければ、とても嬉しく思います。

ミタイ基金プロモーションビデオ: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=clz_izNBFS8



Upon returning to Japan, Fujikake established the Mitai'i Mitakunji (hereafter Mitai'i) Foundation, which aimed to support the inhabitants of Paraguay's rural areas. Taking its name from the words for 'boy' and 'girl' in the language of Paraguay's indigenous Guaraní people, the foundation has now constructed new schools and a health center as well as conducted classes for cooking and nutritional education that benefit entire communities.

In one of her early classes, Fujikake taught the local women how to bake cake – something they had never done before. The recipe they used needed no eggs, and they made do with what was on hand. Improving women's situation, Fujikake discovered, wasn't necessarily a matter of providing resources, but about realizing they could change their lives with what they had. "Each small success leads to confidence," she says.

Now, garnering support from local NGOs and receiving dozens of proposals from Paraguayan municipalities and local people through the post and e-mail each year, Fujikake and the Mitai'i Foundation show no signs of slowing down. The organization is currently building its fifth school in the village of Santo Domingo in Paraguay's Caguazú Department and is also planning to add a small library.

The Mitai'i Foundation

ONE WOMAN AIMS TO AID A NATION

MARINA TOKORO

WHILE Paraguay is one of the world's leading producers of soybeans and cotton, the nation's heavy reliance on agriculture and its susceptibility to volatile weather and global commodity prices renders its national economic development precarious from year to year.

Dr. Yoko Fujikake, a professor at the Graduate School of Urban Innovation at Yokohama National University, first visited Paraguay as a volunteer with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in 1993. Discovering a bond with the socially restricted women she met there, she felt the need to continue her work after the end of her dispatch period in 1995.

But it wasn't always so easy. More than a century of conflict and military dictatorship took its toll on this central South American nation, with Fujikake noting that at some points Paraguay was populated by as many as five women to every man. This scarcity of men contributed to an enhanced sense of male importance and an even lower position for women in an already conservative society. Many women who participated in Fujikake's early projects were met by opposition, and even violence, from the men in their communities. With no precedent for women traveling the red dirt roads and running errands outside of their villages, women attending Fujikake's workshops were suspected of calling on lovers in neighboring towns.

Throughout, Fujikake acted as mediator and sounding board, doing so entirely on her own until 2004. As communities grew accustomed to these new



Above: Paraguayan village women selling their fresh produce at an open-air market in the early morning. Left: Preparing tomatoes for processing in Paraguay



undertakings, women acquired skills such as knitting and jam-making, and were able to instruct their children in effective practices for personal hygiene. These activities might seem simple or uncontrived to a people here in Japan," Fujikake observes. "But most of the women I worked with had never been exposed to the idea that they had the agency to shape their own lives."

Some women who collaborated with Fujikake were eventually able to begin selling fresh vegetables or hand-made processed foods in open-air markets, gaining more confidence and independence through these new means of self-sufficiency.

Prior to 2004, Fujikake had been administering aid on a truly micro scale, offering assistance to one small group or even one person at a time,

traveling to Paraguay annually both as an expert in international cooperation and at her own expense. When a child she had intended to help died during her time away, she realized that bringing help to these rural communities was a greater goal than she could ever achieve on her own. She sought out cooperation from Paraguayan NGOs, JICA volunteers and local agricultural leaders, developing the cooperative network that defines the Mitai'i Foundation today.

Fujikake also delights in the changes she sees among the men in these communities. "Several husbands and sons have taken on tasks like preparing breakfast and ironing clothes," she notes. Perhaps in the future they'll get involved in other household chores and traditional women's tasks as well. ■



Dr. Yoko Fujikake, now a professor at the Graduate School of Urban Innovation at Yokohama National University