

WFWP Japan: UN International Day Of Tolerance - Cooperation In Afghanistan

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November 16 is the International Day for Tolerance designated by the United Nations. Tolerance is "respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world's cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human." On the occasion of this International Day, the 19th Osaka District Federation of WFWP Japan held a talk on "International Cooperation in Afghanistan" on November 14, 2021. Seventy-two people gathered at Kishiwada City Namikiri Hall, with five distinguished guests in attendance.

The first speaker, Mr. Hironobu Kubota gave a lecture on the theme, "What the Media Won't Tell You About Afghanistan." He has been covering Afghanistan since 1997 and has been working to advocate the tragedy of war and the importance of peace as a photojournalist.

While reporting in Afghanistan, he witnessed the death of babies born in a refugee camp due to a lack of medical care. He couldn't resist doing something to help them and that experience motivated him to continue to support the Afghans.

It is true that Afghanistan is under harsh circumstances, however, "The media has created an image of Afghanistan as a scary and dangerous country that people do not want to go to," he pointed out. He introduced the daily life of the refugees through the photos and videos he took, which cannot be seen on the news. By living together with the Afghans in the midst of danger, he was able to enter their hearts and build a relationship of trust. It allowed him to capture the interaction with kind-hearted people, the sparkling eyes of children, and their friendly smiles in photos. The audience could look at Afghanistan from new angles and such expressions of the photos led them to reaffirm the importance of world peace.

Another inspiring speech titled "Afghan Women's Independence and Life Satisfaction" was given by Mrs. Hiroko Nagamori, one of WFWP Japan's overseas volunteer members for Afghanistan. She has been conducting projects since 1994.

As the first phase of support, volunteer members opened a mother tongue classroom for Afghan refugees in India. Next year, they were preparing to open a clinic in Afghanistan, however, the Taliban invasion in

1996 forced them to suspend all projects in the country and escape to India. From that year to 2005, they continued to support Afghans attending schools in India through the foster parents system.

In 2002, they were able to work in Afghanistan for 15 years, supporting school libraries and helping women to become economically independent. From 2018 to the present, they have been conducting a scholarship program for Afghan refugee women in India to study sewing skills.



Looking back on 27 years of activities, Mrs. Nagamori reported that Afghan women they supported have been able to make life worth living by becoming economically independent and helping their husbands and children. The audience was touched by the stories of women trying to acquire skills and become independent even under difficult circumstances.

The volunteer members have never given up and have continued to provide support to Afghanistan, even when the situation in Afghanistan has forced them to suspend their projects and repeatedly move between Afghanistan and India. Mrs. Nagamori concluded her speech by thanking, "We could not have kept carrying out the projects for this long without all the supporters of WFP who care about Afghanistan."

The participants listened attentively to their speeches and applauded with excitement.

Comments from the participants:

I learned that we tend to ignore or distort the truth due to media reports. It was very interesting to see the daily life of Afghans that I didn't know. The photos of suffering children touched my innermost heart. It made me realize that children should not be victims of wars and war must be ended.



Mr. Kubota's lecture was shocking to me, as I am a peace-loving person. I was impressed by his willingness to go into debt to help the people of Afghanistan. Also, it was a surprising fact that many organizations refuse to support them if their activities are not being reported in the media. In comparison, I felt like WFP is not working for self-interest but for true world peace. Mrs. Nagamori's report on the activities for the Afghans was simply mind-boggling. In the end, I was moved when she expressed her gratitude to the supporters with tears. Thank you very much for these precious talks.

