

Sewerage Development and Gender

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Introduction

In mid-July, I visited Cambodia. I had not visited a "developing country" since my student internship in India, so I was a little nervous (mainly because of my stomach). Some people might wonder if India is a developing country. Still, I will define India as a developing country because "developing countries" can be taken to mean "developing countries" in English.

Sewerage in Cambodia

Cambodia, like India, is in the process of development, and while rapid urbanization is taking place, especially in the capital, Phnom Penh, and the second largest city, Siem Reap, the sewage infrastructure is inadequate. In many areas, wastewater is discharged into rivers and swamps without adequate treatment, and there is still a lack of adequate toilets in rural areas. Under these circumstances, with the support of JICA, Kitakyushu City, and other organizations, projects are underway in Phnom Penh to maintain sewerage facilities and improve staff management skills, etc. JS also dispatched staff as JICA experts until recently, so the status, issues, and past wastewater projects in Cambodia can be found here. (Frankly, I cannot say much more than an expert...)

Sewerage and Gender Equality

By the way, do you know that sewerage maintenance and gender equality are closely related? If you are involved in sewerage projects in Japan, you may not be aware of this relationship because projects are not often discussed from a gender perspective. However, in many developing countries, sewerage system maintenance is seen as an element that significantly improves the quality of life of women and girls and contributes to gender equality.

For example, in areas without adequate sewage infrastructure, women and girls often live in unsanitary conditions, increasing their risk of infection. Hygiene is frequently challenging to manage during menstruation, and once a woman contracts an infectious disease, her time at school and opportunities to participate in economic activities are limited. In addition, a lack of public

toilets and sewage facilities limits where women and girls can safely use the bathroom. Nighttime use is hazardous, and sewerage is closely related to women's safety and privacy. The adverse effects of inadequate sewerage tend to be more concentrated on women than men.



6.2 2030年までに、全ての人々の、適切かつ平等な下水施設・衛生施設へのアクセスを達成し、野外での排泄をなくす。女性及び女子、並びに脆弱な立場にある人々のニーズに特に注意を向ける。
By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations

Cited from: <https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/oda/sdgs/statistics/goal6.html>

So, what can be done to eliminate gender inequality? It may sound like a month-old question, but it is necessary to incorporate gender perspectives into sewerage projects accurately. Recently, it has become common practice to some extent (and often mandatory for projects by overseas donors) to integrate women's and girls' opinions and gender perspectives into planning from the planning stage. Still, I believe it is essential to hear from women and girls at the planning stage and involve women in the project's decision-making process. I think it is necessary not only to listen to the opinions of women and girls at the planning stage but also to have their participation and involvement in the decision-making process. In other words, I feel that women need to be present as engineers and as responsible persons who can be involved in the policy-making of the project.

However, the reality is quite severe. There were far fewer women involved in the sewerage business on this trip, and I was the only woman among the operators specializing in sewerage in Japan and Cambodia.

Finally

I want to conclude this paper by expressing my hope that this report will encourage people to think about sewerage and gender equality, and that, if possible, the number of women involved in sewerage projects in Japan will increase, and that the development of Japan's sewerage infrastructure will further contribute to gender equality around the world.

I was worried about my stomach, but it was not a problem in Phnom Penh because of the excellent condition of the water supply system. (Thanks to Kitakyushu City! The #Miracle of Phnom Penh)