

Expanding future possibilities

Hirakû

32

《Special Feature》

Kimiko Nakayama, CEO's visit to Bangladesh

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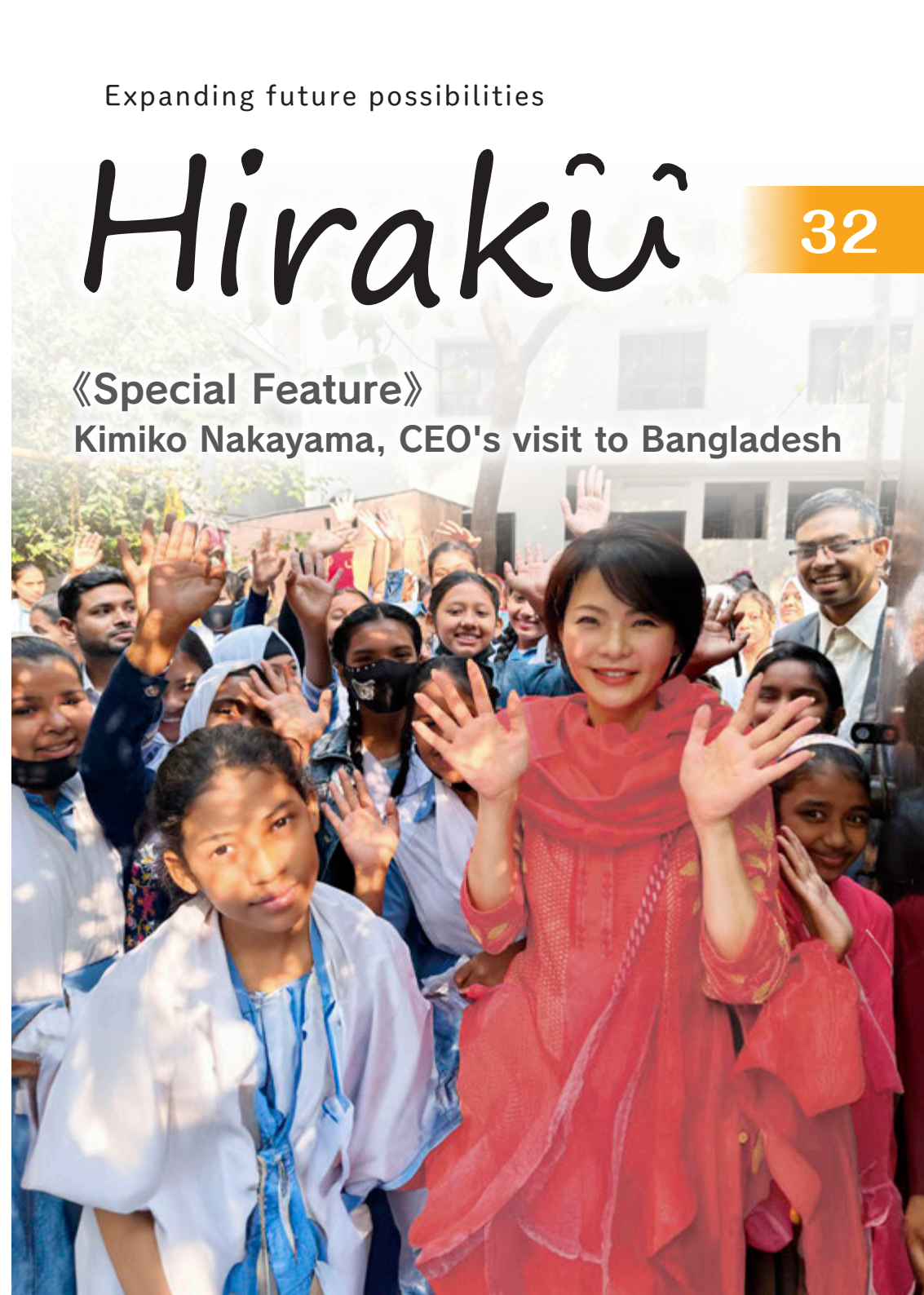
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Life and Education in an Emerging Country:
Striving to Break the Cycle of Poverty

Kimiko Nakayama,
Kinder Kids, CEO

A Visit to Bangladesh

Last month, I had the chance to visit Bangladesh and witness firsthand the local education system and the problems caused by poverty.

I'd like to share what I learned and my thoughts about what we can do to improve the situation.

The Story Behind the Visit to Bangladesh - Meeting with Dr. Muhammad Yunus

Around 6 to 7 years ago, I learned about **Dr. Muhammad Yunus**, an economist and entrepreneur from Bangladesh, from a university professor who taught me about **social business**. Dr. Yunus is renowned for his innovative approach to providing "microcredit"—small loans without collateral—to financially help impoverished people. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts in spreading the concept of social business.

I read Dr Yunus's book "**A World of Three Zeros: The New Economics of Zero Poverty, Zero Unemployment, and Zero Net Carbon Emissions**" and was deeply impressed. I had the chance to visit Bangladesh because my son was involved in activities there. Through this trip, I was able to better understand the activities he is involved in and learned about the local approach to education and social issues.



(Above) Meeting with Dr. Muhammad Yunus at Yunus Centre in Dhaka
(Left) "A World of Three Zeros" by Muhammad Yunus

I was shocked by the poverty conditions in Bangladesh.

During my visit, I witnessed **the harsh realities that street children and families living on the streets** are facing. I learned that nearly half of the school-age children have no parents, and women who have unwanted pregnancies stay in shelters and receive support such as vocational training even after giving birth. Moreover, many children born in these shelters are eventually placed with foster parents and adopted through placement agencies. The difficult situation of street children is especially distressing. We met children who survive by collecting rubbish. They combine their meager earnings to buy food, and sleep near garbage heaps. Shockingly, some of them turn to sniffing glue as a desperate attempt to alleviate hunger.

People contributing to solving poverty in Bangladesh ①



【Dr. Muhammad Yunus】

Born in Chittagong in southern Bangladesh, Dr. Muhammad Yunus obtained his master's degree from The University of Dhaka before moving to the United States to pursue a Ph.D. in economics at Vanderbilt University. After returning to Bangladesh, he became the Dean of the Faculty of Economics at the University of Chittagong in 1972. Witnessing the poverty caused by the famine of 1974, he initiated activities to eradicate poverty in Bangladesh. In 1983, he founded Grameen Bank to help rural poor become financially independent. In 2006, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his contribution to alleviate poverty and maintaining peace through "microcredit". Dr. Muhammad Yunus is also an advocate of "social business" - a business approach to solving social issues through business.

【Yunus Social Business】

Social business is a term defined by Dr. Muhammad Yunus in his book "Creating a World Without Poverty: Social Business and the Future of Capitalism." It refers to enterprises aimed at **addressing social issues like poverty, racial discrimination, food shortages, and environmental destruction**. Its principles consist of: "The purpose of business is **not only to maximise profits but also to address social issues such as poverty, education, and the environment**." "Achieving economic sustainability," and "Maintaining a positive working environment for employees"

In a home I visited in a slum area, I met a family of four living in a cramped space, barely six tatami mats in size, which included a kitchen and toilet. Many fathers work as bicycle rickshaw drivers, but half of their earnings are taken by the area controllers, leaving them with minimal income to support their families. Mothers contribute to the family income through home-based work, enabling them to afford housing in the low-rent area of the slum. For homeless people, having a roof over their head, even in such modest dwellings within the slum, represents a significant step forward and becomes one of their goals.



Slum boys living off gathered rubbish

A Beacons of Hope: Grameen Euglena and Ekmattra

Grameen Euglena is a social business venture, established by Dr. Muhammad Yunus, founder of Grameen Bank, partnered with the Japanese company Euglena (led by President Mitsuru Izumo). **Grameen Euglena aims to tackle poverty and improve nutrition in Bangladesh**. The organization contributes to solving social issues in Bangladesh by offering free Euglena cookies to malnourished children, providing farmers with microcredit for mung bean cultivation as advocated by Dr Yunus, and offering cultivation



Bangladesh is one of the countries with a strong affinity for Japan. Students introduced Bangladesh using the Japanese they had learned.

techniques and sales assistance. Grameen Euglena aims to create a sustainable society.

Ekmattra is a non-governmental organization (NGO) founded in 2004 by humanitarian aid worker Masaki Watanabe, who served as our interpreter and guide during our visit. Ekmattra focuses on **supporting street children and raising awareness about their plight**. It offers basic education, including reading, writing, and arithmetic, to street children at **open-air schools** and provides **shelters** to ensure their safety. In addition, Ekmattra provides **various vocational training programs** to help children become financially independent in the future. It is especially impressive that former students who had received support from Ekmattra are now giving support by providing education to street children and giving them hope. Ekmattra also operates shelters for women who have experienced domestic violence or have kicked out by their families. The organization offers vocational training to such women, empowering them to achieve independence.

The children's bright eyes and reflections on what real education means.

I went to a school where Grameen Euglena was handing out Euglena cookies, and even amidst their impoverished circumstances, Bangladeshi children were genuinely enjoying their time at school. Their eyes were bright with excitement, and when asked if they enjoyed school, they all responded "Yes!" They were surprised when I mentioned that many children in Japan do not share the same enthusiasm for school and sometimes choose not to attend. I believe the reason why children from less privileged backgrounds can enjoy spending time at school is because local education offers more than just test scores and grades. The schools provide a **place to connect with others and foster the children's confidence and nurtures their dreams**.

People contributing to solving poverty in Bangladesh ②

【Hiroki Watanabe, Co-founder of Ekmattra】



Hiroki Watanabe was deeply shocked by the sight of slums in Phuket that he saw when he visited as a college student. After graduating, he worked to save money and eventually moved to Bangladesh in 2002.

In 2004, he founded the NGO "Ekmattra" to support street children in Bangladesh. Recognizing the need for vocational training and leadership development, he established the "Ekmattra Academy" in 2016. He has been actively involved in various support activities for helping street children in Bangladesh.



Mae Watanabe is dedicated to supporting impoverished women, offering handicraft workshops to provide employment opportunities for underprivileged women. She is actively contributing to society, together with her husband, Taiki.



Bangladeshi children are genuinely enjoying their time at school

Sustainable International Aid

When it comes to international support, I believe that **small but sustainable orders** are more effective in supporting local employment than large one-time work orders. For instance, the mung bean cultivation project initiated by Grameen Euglena, which grew steadily over a span of more than 10 years.

Kinder Kids has devised a plan to place regular orders for cloth bags and other products from Bangladesh, to support and strengthen its textile industry. We hope that this initiative will provide a stable source of income for local women and contribute to more **ecologically sustainable employment opportunities**.



Handmade products from Ekmattra Handicrafts, made from traditional jute fabric and special stones used in traditional Bangladeshi attire.

New Perspectives Gained from Visiting Bangladesh

Meeting Dr. Muhammad Yunus was meaningful for me. During our conversation, Dr. Yunus said, **"While accumulating wealth is rewarding, the joy of making others happy far exceeds it."** He taught me that true fulfillment lies not just in seeking profits, but also in making contributions to society. Dr. Yunus also emphasized the importance of having the courage to take action. While many may conceive brilliant ideas, only a few put these ideas into action. It is important to teach **the importance of taking action and contributing to society**.

The First Step We Can Take to Create a Better World



Many of the experiences I encountered during my visit to Bangladesh left a strong impression on me, even surpassing the shock I felt when I visited Cambodia, where KinderKids is providing support. It would be invaluable for Japanese children to see the reality of such **circumstances - a reality they cannot even imagine**. In addition, it would offer an excellent learning opportunity for Kinder Kids and Grad Club students to visit Bangladesh and reflect on the situation there. By organizing a study tour, we could also support the activities of organizations like Ekmattra.

Unlike hygienic and safe Japan, there are still many places in the world where people struggle to meet their basic needs. It's particularly distressing to see children becoming victims of social issues. They are placed in difficult situation and cannot change it through their own efforts alone. However, even if it's just a small contribution, we can improve the situation when many of us get involved.

The first step is for us to know and understand the reality of the world. Then, by thinking about what we can do and then taking action, we can work towards creating a better world. This trip has reinforced my determination to continue teaching children the **importance of "understanding the world"**.

Childcare
Advice

Consultation

Career
Guidance

English
Level

F O R

English
Ability
after
Graduation

Parents and Guardians



At KinderKids, we organized "**Consultation for Parents and Guardians**" to help them resolve various childcare concerns. This year, we conducted consultation sessions with 75 families at 13 schools. While the majority of the participants were mothers, we also had three fathers and five couples.

We spoke with the organizer and advisor of the "Consultation for Parents and Guardians" about her insights gained from talking with numerous parents.

The Reasons for Organizing the "Consultation for Parents and Guardians"

My husband and I both work and are raised three children who all have graduated from Kinder Kids. I myself have also experienced the same parenting worries and struggles as other parents, encountering challenges and anxieties along the way. Based on these experiences, I aimed not only to listen to parental concerns but also provide support and work together with them to find solutions to their childcare issues. Talking to someone about your thoughts and feelings can lighten your heart a little. So, I decided to organize the "Consultation for Parents and Guardians" because I thought I could understand parents' concerns as a "mother of former Kinder Kids students" who has gone through similar experiences.



Wanting Someone to Listen: The Loneliness During the COVID-19 Pandemic

A mother looked back on the past three years, saying, "My husband was not with me when I gave birth during the COVID-19 pandemic, and I found it difficult to seek help from my busy husband or my own parents."

She then started shedding tears, saying, "I wanted someone to listen to me, listen to my grievances, and acknowledge my efforts. At that moment, I realized how hard it is when there is no one to consult with."

"Is this really the right choice?" Parenting is filled with never-ending uncertainties.

Another mother shared her experience of not having her older child learn English at an early age and changed schools because the school that her child took the entrance exam for and then enrolled in did not meet her child's needs. To prevent her younger child from facing a similar situation, she chose Kinder Kids and carefully selected the elementary school. Nevertheless, she was worried about whether she had made the right choice. As we conversed, I reflected on my own experiences and talked about how the desires and expectations of parents affect their children. I stressed the importance of respecting their children's opinions, supporting their "Wishes," sharing enjoyable moments together, and not giving up easily when children choose something for themselves. Through our conversation, the mother appeared to organize her thoughts and find some clues how to prioritize her children's happiness and growth.

What was the Reaction of the Parents who Participated?

We asked some personal questions during the consultations, and there were some who felt uncomfortable and we apologized for any discomfort this caused. However, most of the participants expressed their desire for future consultation sessions.

The school manager mentioned that "Many parents left with refreshed faces". This feedback reaffirmed the value of conducting these consultation sessions.



A Message from the Childcare Adviser



Kumiko Yamashita
Management Dept.
Kinder Kids

We often tell children, "Treat others as you would like to be treated." Similarly, I adhere to the principle of not treating my children in ways I didn't appreciate from my own parents or other adults. All of us want to share joyful moments together with our children, always with smiles on all of our faces. When it comes to "disciplining" children, I believe it's crucial not to prolong it indefinitely, but to swiftly conclude it once they reflect on their behavior and apologize. Each child's circumstances are different, including things like gender, presence of siblings, personality, and family background, etc. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to parenting. Through these consultation sessions, I hope the sessions will help parents ease their concerns and to help discover solutions.



Introduction of the Kinder Kids Guest House in Canada

We have prepared the "Kinder Kids Guest House in Canada" to offer families participating in the "Global Transfer" Program a safe and comfortable place to stay. This eliminates the need for parents to search and book accommodations on platforms like Airbnb. Situated in a peaceful residential area, our guest house is conveniently located just an 18-minute drive from Oakville School and a 20-minute drive from Clarkson School.



The spacious kitchen allows you to enjoy cooking during your stay.



Toys, picture books, and other children's items are available for use.

We also provide toys, children's tableware, and mealtime booster seats, sparing families from bringing these items from Japan.

Additionally, right in front of the house, there's a spacious park with playground equipment where children can play to their heart's content.



Information on Kinder Kids Guest House in Canada

- Address** 265 Sarah Cline Drive, Oakville Ontario
- Parking** here are parking spaces for 2 cars, and you can access the house directly from the parking lot.
- Bedding** A queen-sized bed is provided, and a crib is available in the closet.
- Security** The front door and the doors to each room are equipped with keypad door locks. We will email you the access code numbers one week prior to your departure.
- Check-in** There is no set check-in time. You are welcome to check in at any hour, so there is no need to worry about arriving late at night.

Bedrooms

*Please contact us for the room rates.



[Queen]
Private
bathroom



[Double1]
Shared
bathroom



[Double2]
Shared
bathroom

*There is a shared bathroom on the 2nd floor and in the basement.

If you visit Canada on the Global Transfer Program, we encourage you to consider staying at the guesthouse.

KINDER KIDS × familiar

Collaboration Goods by Kinder Kids and "familiar"

Lesson Bag & Pass Case Set Available for Purchase!

Limited Quantity



Kinder Kids has worked together with "familiar," (a children's apparel brand that previously conducted a seminar on "How to Choose Items for Entrance Exams" at Kinder Kids Nishinomiya School), will release new items!

Under the corporate philosophy of "Unleashing Children's Potential," familiar consistently supports children in expanding their capabilities through the provision of "Goods," "Events," and "Learning." Their products, crafted with a sincere desire for the healthy development of children, have garnered the trust of numerous parents. familiar, with its focus on product quality, and Kinder Kids, dedicated to cultivating children with a global outlook, both share a common philosophy of recognizing the "potential" inherent in every child. It is this shared belief that has led to our collaboration.

We've created a "Lesson Bag" along with a matching "Pass Case," both featuring embroidered patches designed by Kinder Kids, made using familiar's beloved flat denim.

These items are certain to be practical for school or after-school activities!



A wide bag that can accommodate B4-sized documents, complete with a gingham check lining.



Kinder Kids students, along with phonics characters, are joined by fami-chan from familiar!



The pass case is perfect for storing the blue card.



Velcro (hook and loop fastener tape) ensures that the cards remain securely inside.



Limited Quantity

Kinder Kids × familiar Lesson Bag & Pass Case Set

[Price] 23,100 yen (tax included)

[Sales Start] Early April

*Orders will be accepted on Kinder+ on a first come first served basis

Please visit Kinder+ for more information.→



*Available for purchase by Kinder Kids students from Baby Class to K3.