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Panel on "Gender Gap within Household and the Labor Market:
Comparative Studies of Korea, China and Japan "

Examination of Unequal Income between Women and Men in Japan and Korea

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Women still earn less than men, although anti-discrimination legislation, enforcement of "equal pay for equal work" and/or "equal pay for work of equal value", as well as working women's movements have resulted in a reduction of the gender earnings gap in all industrialised countries over the past few decades.

The persistence of this gap has generated considerable debate over the extent to which it reflects discrimination and the extent which it can be explained by productivity-related characteristics.

To investigate this, I will compare the determinants of the gender income gap in Japan and Korea, with the use of the Blinder-Oaxaca decomposition technique which is the most widely used econometric method for analyses of gender earnings gap. Japan and Korea have similarities in terms of women's employment. Firstly, double peak pattern in women's economic participation is still remarkable in both countries, whereas in most developed countries women's employment profile becomes much closer to the traditional 'male' pattern. Secondly, the gender pay gap for full-timers in both countries has narrowed only slightly for the past 30 years and still remains the considerable amount of gaps. Thirdly, in Japan and Korea, seniority / age is more important than jobs in determining wages, which would give room for management discretion and thus potential discrimination against women.

An examination of Japanese gender income differentials will be based on the 2002 Employment Status Survey. The survey is a national cross-section data, conducted every five years in Japan. For Korean analyses, I will use a panel data set conducted by "Frontiers of Gender Studies" Project, Ochanomizu University, which was selected by the Japanese Ministry of Education and Science as a 21st Century COE (Centre of Excellence) programme in 2003. It aims to examine changes in family, work and household budgets in Asian countries, with particular attention to gender relations. Both data contains related necessary variables as well as income information and are individual level data, which empowers us to conduct a detailed investigation of gender inequities.

An investigation of the factors underlying gender income differentials in these two countries can help to identify obstacles and suggest policies that might reduce such gender inequalities.