

Table Turn Over Ladies - Chabudaigaeshi Joshi Action – Be true to oneself, not feminine.

Chabudai Gaeshi Joshi Action
Kanoko Kamata

Notes for readers: Portions surrounded by boxes are commentary by COJ. The rest of the documentation is by Ms. Kamata, who received peer coaching after a Changemakers Academy workshop.

This translation from Japanese is by Sophie Welsh and edited by Kanoko Kamata.

【Project summary】

1. How would you describe the organizing project in one sentence? (Organizing sentence)

In order to create a society in which we can live as ourselves rather than femininely, we aim to create a sense that it's acceptable to raise our voices and hold a public action (parade) for the cause of living like ourselves on February 28th, 2016, with a hundred other people who share our thoughts, targeting women working and living in Tokyo who want to change their current conditions, and with the realization that our own problems are common issues shared by women.



Acting members

Image of flipping the *Chabudai**



Group picture after *Chabudai*-flipping



Girls' Power Parade

*a Japanese traditional dinner table, which might be flipped in extreme cases of anger, often by a traditional father figure

2. What kinds of urgency is there, and for whom?

When I was thirty-three, I decided to study abroad, thinking, “I only have this time while I am unmarried.” But where I went, there were women who had come to study from all over the world, stating circumstances such as “I brought my family” and “My husband is raising the children in our home country”, and they lived with purpose. On the other hand, I was the only exchange student from Japan, an unmarried woman. My friends had seized self-actualized positions in life including roles as wives and mothers. Once I returned home, I lived with a sense of suffocation. When I talked to Sachiko Osawa, a community organizing workshop coach, and pondered with her, “Why does it feel oppressive to live here?”, we developed a hypothesis: “Japanese women bear too much on themselves.” When the two of us listened to women’s voices in closed dialogues, we found that they feel the pressure of others’ desire for them to play the roles of good mothers, wives, and daughters, and that they are expected to be obedient to others and charming. In the aspect of work, they hold dissatisfaction regarding the idea of raising a child in the future in a workplace where long work hours are the norm, and they have no choice but to desensitize themselves to daily sexual harassment, and there were some who were dissatisfied with being treated as decorations in the workplace. In the World Economic Forum’s gender gap index, Japan places poorly, in 101th place among 145 countries.

For reference: 1st place Iceland, 2nd Norway, 3rd Finland, 4th Sweden, 5th Ireland. Among Asian countries, the Philippines are in 7th place, Mongolia in 56th, Thailand in 60th, China in 91st, and Korea in 115th place.

3. How will the topic be resolved?

This is true of me as well, but even if you think, “I want to live my life and work with purpose”, it is expected that if you get married or have children, the women take responsibility for the household and play the role of the wife and mother. Though one may think it’s wrong not to be accepted as equal unless one works long hours, that’s the norm and one doesn’t think it’s

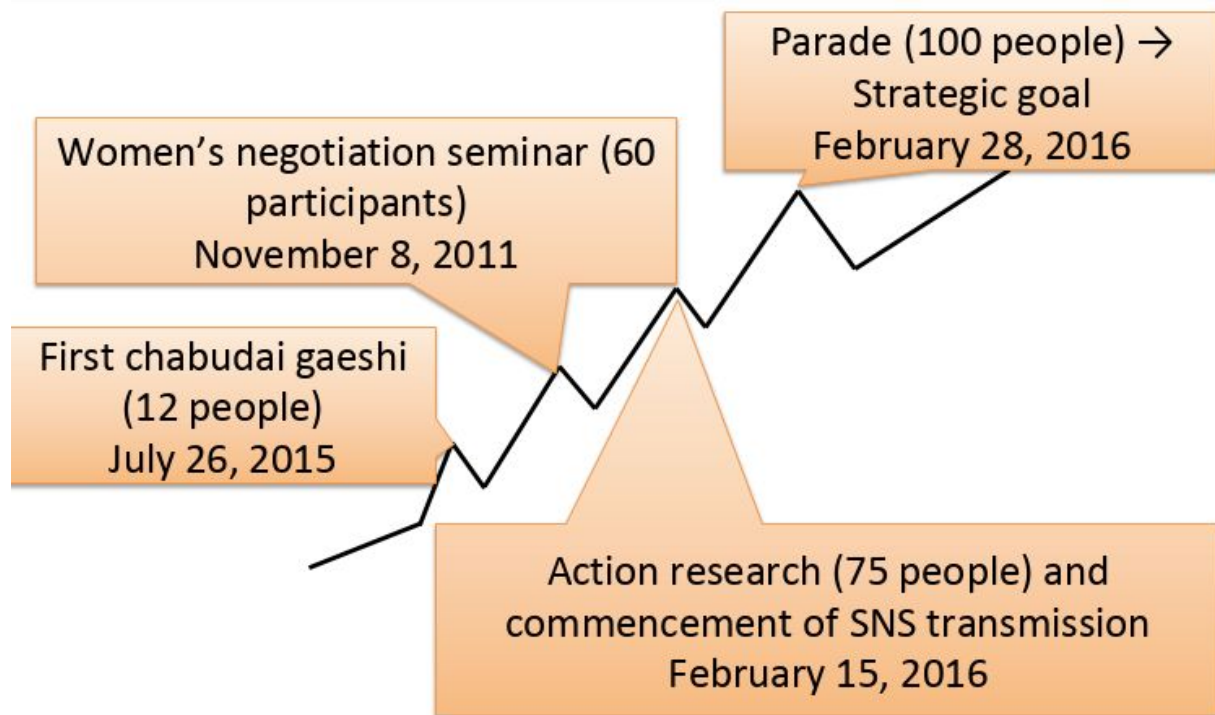
something that can change. And sexual harassment is so common that it isn't pointed out and we ignore it, laugh it off, and accept it. But women shouldn't have to be the only ones to take responsibility of the household, and it should be acceptable to push back against words and actions that hurt us. I thought it would be necessary for the women themselves to change what is seen as "normal" in society. To that end, I thought it would be important to create a space where one can feel comfortable vocalizing one's discomfort in daily life, to make society conscious that women aren't respected as they are as individuals, and to create awareness that there is a problem.

So we made our overarching goal to create a society in which women can live their lives as themselves rather than conform to what is perceived as feminine, and our strategic goal to spark a public action on February 28th, 2016 for a hundred people who share our concern with a message of "Let's live the way we want!"

The theory of change we seek is for women to realize that their individual problems are shared among others and to create a sense that it is acceptable to vocalize them (refer to the section "Strategy" for more on the analysis of the problem). Based on this theory, we thought of a "chabudai gaeshi (turn over a table)" event as the tactic. Participants would discuss what struggles they are bearing and why they suppress them, and they would share with each other what they suppress internally. This leads them to realize that the limitations and dilemmas they face are not unique but shared by many other women. Finally, each shouts what she wants to vocalize, then announce their thoughts on what they can do to change those dilemmas and limitations. Since we thought that rather than merely shouting, it would be best to break this barrier in a fun way, participants flip a cardboard chabudai. In addition, as an event for chabudai gaeshi participants to come back, we decided to hold an "event to connect women", with the help of a psychological counselor to aid assertiveness and such.

However, upon the realization that participants would not return to event-type tactics even if they had felt empowered in the moment, we changed our method to an "action research" in which any women can participate as an agent. This is a participatory action research to visualize what women living in current society feel and for women to share their awareness of problems through discussion. We gathered 65 women's voices through the methodology in which members of Chabudai Gaeshi Joshi Action interviewed their friends and acquaintances, who in turn interviewed their friends and acquaintances. We conducted interviews on the women's thoughts and feeling covering a wide range of topics from how they work to their household environments. For circumstances on the change in strategy, please refer to the section "How we set goals for, reflected on, and used the lessons from each peak action".

4. Campaign timeline



5. Timeline

Year month	Action/event
May, June 2015	Sachiko Osawa/Kamata Kanoko discuss what is the problem
Sunday, July 26th	Chabudai gaeshi event
Tuesday, September 6th	First core team meeting (4 people) - second chabudai gaeshi event
Wednesday, October 14th	First "connecting" event
Sunday, October 18th	Third chabudai event
Sunday, November 8th	Women's negotiation seminar
Saturday, November 28th	3rd strategy meeting, chabudai event

November to January	participant-hosted, collaborative chabudai event with external organizations (KURASOU, Shitamachi Version, Jiyuugaoka Version, Escaria)
Sunday, January 10th	Action research kickoff
January, February	Action research
Monday, February 15th	Action research SNS announcement
Sunday, February 28th	Girls' Power Parade

【Process】

(1) Building the leadership team

With the Changemakers Academy workshop held in collaboration with Change.org in May 2015 for action on gender problems as a starting point, I talked with Sachiko Osawa about my desire to make life more comfortable for women in Japan. The two of us held the first chabudai gaeshi event on July 26th, 2015. Twelve people participated, and on September 6th, we had the first leadership team meeting with two participants who expressed an interest in running the group. Two more people joined the team after participating in our chabudai events in September and October, and one more joined in time for the women's negotiation seminar in November for a total of 7 people on the leadership team.

Five people joined at our strategic meeting on November 28th. At the three December meetings, everyone discussed what we would ask in the action research, and about two people joined each time. In January, we restructured in order to perform the February 28th public action and action research. Some leadership team members wanted to change the capacity in which they were participating, due to pregnancy or changes in their work, so we changed members.

- Core leadership team: 7 people
- Roles: 2 people tasked with action research, 1 with art creation for February 28th, 1 with Internet matters, 1 with recruiting, 1 for general service
- Action research leadership team: 6 people (2 of which were (sub)leaders on the core team, 1 tasked with information maintenance, 1 with the Facebook group, 1 with tool maintenance, and 1 with interviews)
- Team creating art for the February 28th action: 4 people (1 of whom was on the core team, 3 from an artist group called Tomorrow Girls' Troop)

Due to a clear division of labor, each person was able to work independently. Even while the people responsible for action research and public action were divided and

concentrated on their own work, we were able to reflect the results of the research in the action (by designing the opinions heard in the research onto the placards held during the public action). On the other hand, I don't think some things were clear in the division of labor, such as what to do about logistics. Additionally, since the two members responsible for web and recruiting were in a busy phase at work, their areas stalled and impacted the event itself, and the members in charge of those areas felt stressed. I think it would be beneficial to divide the work with an awareness of interdependence.

Though we had discussed our shared goal in September at the foundation, by November, members felt concerned that they did not share the same goals for the society we were aiming for and what to do in order to achieve that. As a result, we took an opportunity in December to resume the conversation about what kind of society to aim for. Each person shared what kind of society they envisioned, and we gained a sense of unity out of the shared points of everyone's ideas. We learned from that experience the significance of revising our overarching goals regularly.

We created our norms in September at the foundation. At the start of our activity, we had reread them many times to check whether we had kept them, and we had also done a norm correction. The norm of submitting an SOS was a good one for prompting interdependence in the context of an activity done while working. In December, we checked out norms once again. However, once people became busy in January, we forgot to reread our norms, and the norm correction wasn't very thorough. I don't think this was hugely influential, but maybe we could have been a little stricter with our use of time. In the future, I think that the team will be strengthened if I will take some time even if we are busy, if only for a minute, to reread the norms and make the norm correction thorough.

Commentary on skills used

1. Explaining why one decided to become involved (public narrative/story of self)

We made sure that the regular meeting check-ins of the Chabudai Gaeshi Joshi Action were always opportunities to know each others' values: "Why am I participating in this action?" "What women's issues I think are wrong". Since everyone was busy with jobs, we wanted to make the meetings a place to know each other well in addition to being meetings to coordinate topics. As a result, members were able to share their awareness of problems.

In addition, we built in opportunities to train the "story of self" into the meetings, and members gave each other feedback, understood each other, and thought about what to do in order to involve other people.

2) Strategy

Who is your constituency?	
Women who work and live in Tokyo who want to change their current conditions.	
Change	
What is the problem they face?	When that problem is solved, how will the world look different?
They are limited by their role as women and others' expectations of them. The women themselves agree as well.	There will be more women who know what it means to be themselves and can live it as reality.
Why haven't those problems been solved?	What is necessary to solve the problem?
The women themselves haven't internalized it as a problem that ought to be solved. Society sees it as normal and not as a problem.	To realize that one's problems are shared by other women, and to feel that it's acceptable to vocalize them (sense of safety, confidence).

At a leadership team meeting in September, in accordance with the framework for strategy I and II, we wrote out an analysis of the problem, our goal, a theory for change based on analysis of power, an organizing sentence, and a timeline.

The following is the initial organizing sentence from September.

【Overarching goal】 To create a society where we can live not “as women ought”, but as we ourselves choose to,

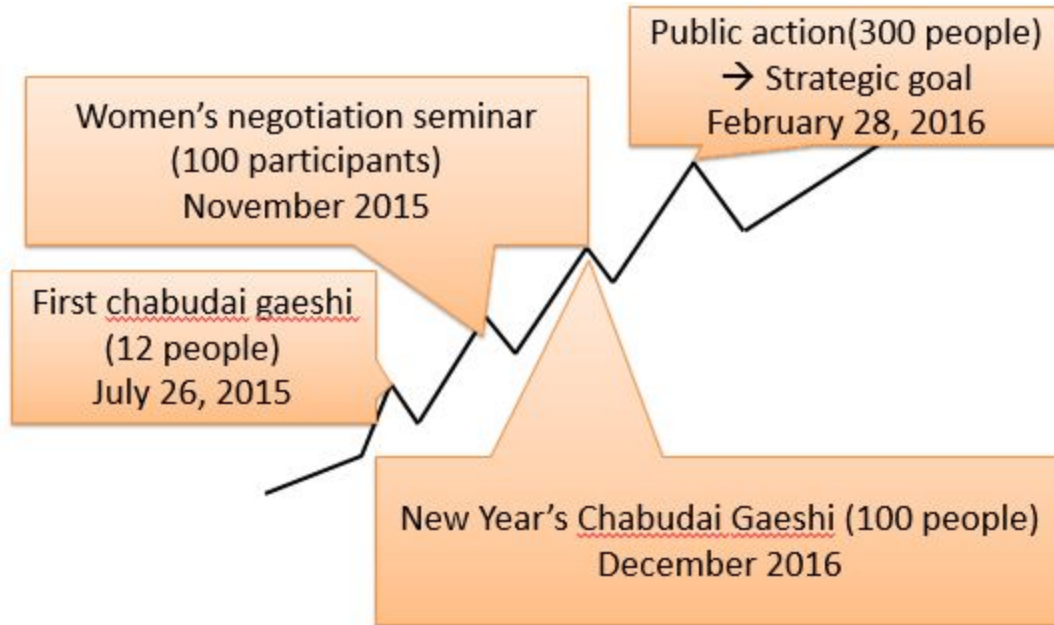
【Constituency】 with women who work and live in Tokyo who want to change their current conditions,

【Theory of change】 to realize that one's problems are shared by other women, and to feel that it's acceptable to vocalize them,

【By when】 on February 28th, 2016

【Strategic goal】 we will hold a public action for 300 people and announce the foundation of an organization to change the environment surrounding women.

This was our initial timeline created in September.



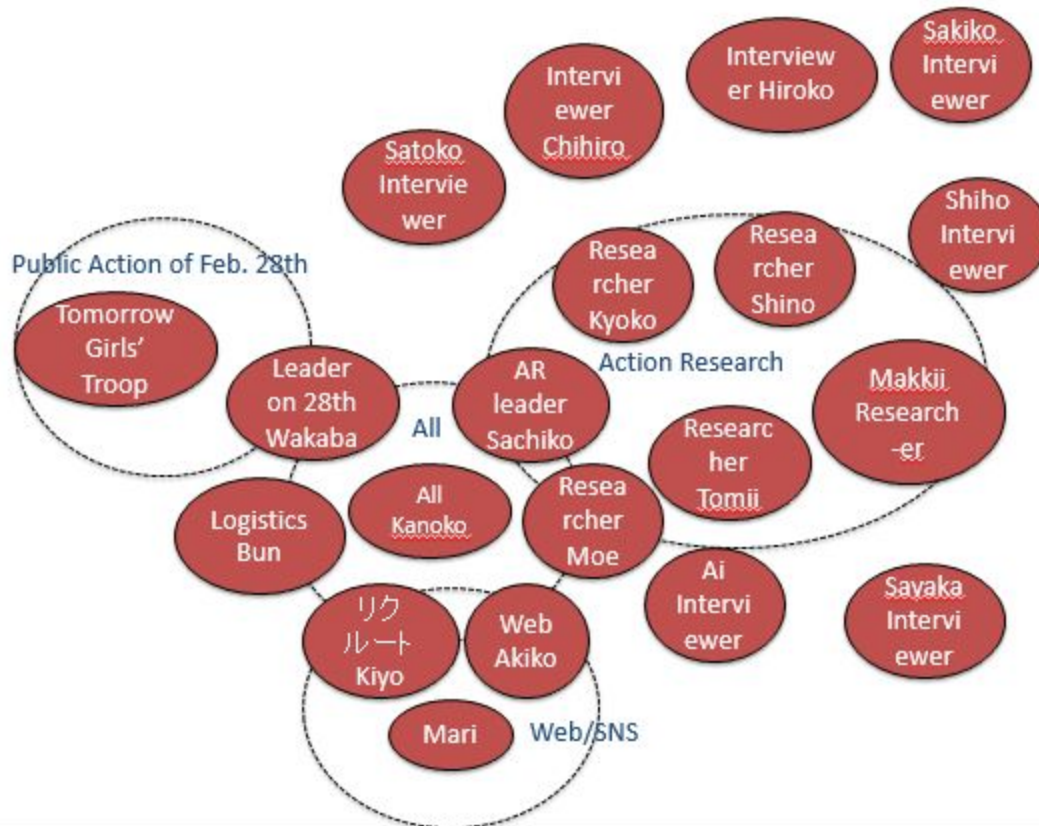
Four members created this plan at first, but as leadership team grew to seven people until November, we shared it with the new members, revised with each peak action, and changed the strategy. I will discuss the change in strategy in a later section.

3) Creating an outwardly expanding organization

As I wrote in the section on the construction of the leadership team, we built up to the second tier as a team. The second-tier team comprised the action research team, the art design team for the 28th, and the web/SNS team.

The structure of the second-tier team is described below.

- Action research leadership team: 6 people (of whom 2 were (sub)leaders in the core team, 1 in information maintenance, 1 tasked with Facebook group maintenance, 1 with tool maintenance, 1 with interviews)
- Art design team for the action on February 28th: 4 people (1 in core team, 3 from an artist group called Ashita Joshitai)
- Publicization/web: 1 person tasked with the Facebook page, 1 person only tasked with the site.



One of the participants who came to the December meeting to create questions became the action research team interviewer on the third tier, and they also took on the task of compiling short stories based on the results. There was/were also people who took part in the second-tier meetings. Because it was possible for anyone to do the interviews, the number of people who participated in the regular meetings increased rapidly, and it was easy to invite people in.

As a point to improve, the enthusiasm of the action research team was lower than the leadership team's. The gap disappeared with the peak event, but it was a concern for the leadership team during the activity. We did not form the third tier as a team, but I think might have been a way to form a team for them. I would like to conduct reflections and healing to see how to raise a sense among members that the second and third tiers' success is key to the success of the campaign.

I also think it is important to create an environment where people can invite their friends to increase membership. Our member recruitment was limited to a certain subset of people. Since I have many close associations and because voluntary organizations maintain themselves through relationships, I felt as if I was faced with much of the work of maintaining the group. However, I think that during the public action and parade, all members gained confidence and courage from the sense of "we can do it if we try", and I think the sense of cohesion as an organization increased strongly.

4) Establishing goals, acting, and reflecting on each peak action and use the lessons learned

After the chabudai gaeshi event of July 26th, we succeeded in performing a solid reflection each time to make improvements for the next occasions.

After the women's negotiation seminar on November 8th, we created an opportunity to reflect on the entirety of the activities before that. The reflection method was based on Professor Hackman's framework 1) whether the problem was resolved, 2) whether the organization was strengthened, 3) whether individuals grew, and we used our initial goal of the number of attendees as a benchmark for evaluation. Neither chabudai gaeshi event nor the connection event nor the negotiation seminar had reached our goal of attendee numbers, but thanks to Prof. Hackman's framework, we didn't blame ourselves or anyone else involved, but thought about the question of "Why didn't people come?" as the basis for our reflection.

The target constituency:

One the issue of women's difficulties, we thought we could divide along the axes of capacity (people who can say it's a problem, people who can't say it's a problem) and the axis of purpose (people who think we should say it's a problem, those who don't think we should say it's a problem". At the beginning of our action, we thought we would target "people who can say it's a problem?" and "people who think we should tell it as a problem".

Revising our theory of change:

We revised "for women to realize that their individual problems are shared among others and to create the sense of safety and confidence to vocalize them", and with opinions heard at previous chabudai gaeshi events in mind, we thought we might add that the problem may not be resolved because "it's vaguely hard to go about life, but the root problem remains unnoticed and unrecognized". Further, we thought we would strengthen the portion about "realizing that our individual problems are shared, common problems among women".

Revising our strategy:

We have about 30 people at our chabudai gaeshi events by November, and 5 people at the connection events, but neither filled the goal we had set. Further, the committee at large had not grown past the seven people. Participants came to the event to vocalize what they wanted to say, but they wouldn't go further with actions such as sharing the experience on Facebook (because they didn't want to be thought of as harboring stress against their work, and so on). We also realized that the chabudai gaeshi event posed a hurdle on those who couldn't vocalize what they wanted to say. In addition, there were concerns that though these actions empowered individuals, the event did not create an explicit consciousness of the fact that the difficulties that women face are social and institutional problems. In order to put force into the portion of our theory about "realizing that individual problems are shared by women", we decided to keep the chabudai gaeshi event for its symbolic and easily understandable nature,

but change the content to target one person's problem and have everybody analyze why it had occurred.

We decided on the action research to increase the changes that participants would come back to future events and become active subjects, rather than remain passive participants. Based on the theory of "realizing that individual problems are shared among women" and that "it's vaguely hard to go about life, the nature of the problem remains vague with something creating a sense of wrongness," the interviews take the shape of conversations to probe what women feel are problems. Members of Chabudai Gaeshi Joshi conducted interviews of their friends and acquaintances, who then in turn interviewed their own friends and acquaintances, resulting in 65 women's voices. These interviews focused on the women's thoughts and feeling covering a wide range of topics from how they work to their household environments, and the key phrases were captured by SNS and compiled into short stories which were displayed on the website. With common views gathered from many women, we have heard that people have felt encouraged and invigorated by the compilation.

Revision of the final peak:

The initial plan was for a public action on the scale of 300 people in a Tokyo station. But we found that it was a larger hurdle than expected to voice concerns in Japan, and we lowered the goal to 100 people. We had thought to publicize the foundation of the organization, but the organization already existed and had taken action, so instead we thought it was beneficial to spread the empowering message of "living on one's own terms rather than being limited by roles" as it increased the number of participants and gave them hope and courage. As planned, we went ahead with the campaign's peak action in the form of a "Girls' Power Parade 2016" on February 28th, 2016. It was a collaboration with the feminist artist group known as "Tomorrow Girls' Troop". It was Chabudai Gaeshi Joshi Action's first public action, where participants held decorative placards reading "I am valuable as I am," "It's not selfish to live on my own terms," "I can say no," chanted "Do we have power?" "Yes we do! We have power!", and crossed the intersection of Omotesando, smiling, and delivered high fives. The participants were fifty people who refused to be defined by society's "roles" and wished to live on their own terms. Though they may have been shy at first, they were emboldened by the presence of their allies and cheers from onlookers, and in the end they were enjoying the chanting. Lured by the smiles of the participants, there were passersby who joined on the spur of the moment. Thirty-seven people attended the social after the parade, and many of them commented, "It was fun" and "I would like to participate again".

Commentary of skills used - 2.

Post-action reflection of strategy and revision <Strategy • action>

It is important to the evaluation of strategy, tactics, and evaluation of the goal accomplishment to examine the effectiveness of the action and program. We can evaluate based on three

measures proposed by Professor Richard Hackman, a scholar of organizational behavior at Harvard University.

- First, was the primary problem resolved? Did it accomplish what it set out to do? For example, did it increase the number of books at the school? Did it ensure that much money would be devoted to environmental protection?
- Second, did it strengthen the organization? Did it deepen understanding, build commitments underlying relationships, and produce new resources?
- Third, did it encourage the growth of each individual undertaking the action? Did they learn, gain confidence, and produce energy - or did they completely exhaust it?

Chabudai Gaeshi Joshi reflected on these points, revised the action program, and revised the strategy itself, which strengthened the constituency and enabled us to correct the strategy leading to the resolution of the problem.

5) Circumstances of the project and looking forward

We were able to see the campaign through at the parade of February 28th, but Chabudai Gaeshi Joshi Action seeks a society in which anyone can live on their own terms, and it will continue its action. After this, I would like to take specific steps to address the difficulties that the women illuminated in the process of this movement. For example, we want to tackle these specific problems directly, such as to push for a society with more child care options and mechanisms to make partnerships equal. As a first step, we will hold a kickoff meeting on April 17th for women who want to live on their own terms to brainstorm specific actions.

【After receiving coaching】

I mainly received peer coaching once every two weeks, when I asked for coaching and got feedback regarding my challenge that we cannot communicate our cause to the third party well, I came to realize the laxity of our analysis. The biggest advantage of peer coaching is that other organizers' challenges are also my challenges in my campaign. Sometimes the other organizers were facing the same issues I was, such as "We can't gather participants" and "The division of labor isn't going well", and every time I noticed these similarities even where I hadn't been aware of those issues as problems for which to receive coaching. Especially since there are few people to discuss issues until the leadership team solidifies, it was a relief to be able to share these issues at peer coaching. In addition, since I am an executive director of COJ, I was aware that "I have to make the campaign succeed" "I have to stay faithful to what they teach", but after being coached by Junko Yoda, I realized that I was becoming too hyper-conscious, and I changed my perspective to think, "What is necessary to empower members and for me to grow?"

Reflection through the campaign

1. Pluses (what we did well)

We performed reflections after every peak. I had felt something wrong with our activity leading up to the women's negotiation seminar, so afterward, we had the courage to change the

strategy. We built a second tier team, we saw the peak action through, and we were able to see the next leaders rising in the group.

2. Deltas (points to improve)

Among the difficulties of women in general, we didn't have a specific focus, so although we were able to reach a sense of unity, we didn't have many participants who wanted to actively resolve them. I would like to focus the issue more in our next action, and I would like to strengthen the second tier more as well

3. Lessons learned

This was our first public action undertaken in Japan, but I noticed how a positive and enjoyable experience for everyone could lead to empowerment. We only had fifty people in the event rather than the one hundred we had planned for, but I felt as if we had charged with more than fifty people's worth of power, as if it had been 100 or 200 people instead. I think the participation of the passersby and the cheers from around us was a big factor in this. I felt naturally that if we had been able to express what we wanted to say through this enjoyable action, then the next time, we could do something bigger and change society. Perhaps this is the effect of accumulating the power of many people. I want to feel more of this kind of power. I am looking forward to our next action.

~Writer's profile~ Kanoko Kamata

I did not originally have a particular interest in gender problems. I think I hadn't looked at the problem because I didn't think it could change. Though I was an executive director of an NPO, Community Organizing Japan, I didn't have confidence and was deferential toward men. When I reflected on why I wanted to found Chabudai Gaeshi Joshi, I realized that one reason was that I had experienced a lack of respect for women's voices after entering society. In creating a society that respects all voices, I want to make society comfortable for everyone to live in, and this is why I take action through Chabudai Gaeshi Joshi.

