In this report, I would like to discuss ‘Maternal health’. Nowadays, the population is increasing in the world. On the other hand, many mothers cannot be given the enough systems to give birth safely, especially in developing countries. All people have the birth from mothers, and many women have the situations to give birth in their lives. So, it is common issue for all humans to make the enough environments and keep them good. And I am interested in the women’s issue. So, I would like to deep the issue from view of maternal health care. In this report, first, I show you some statistics of the issue and discuss them. Next, I explain MDGs: Millennium Development Goals; this is the goal to improve the environments for mothers in developing countries. Finally, I tell you what the actors in the world do to fight against the problems.

How many mothers die in the world?

In developing countries, there are not good hospital systems and many skilled birth attendants who have skills and techniques to help mothers in giving birth. So, in the developing countries, mothers cannot be supported enough. It is a serious problem.

In 2008, an estimated 358,000 maternal deaths occurred worldwide and this is estimated, on the other hand, the real number is more than the number: 358,000. There are many mothers who die in the world. Almost all (98 %) of these death occur in developing countries, with rate highest in sub-Saharan Africa and in South-East Asia. In these regions, there are many poor countries and many of the countries cannot have the enough systems. And sometimes, the administrations of the countries are unsteady so they cannot establish the structures which the supports go down to mothers. Of course, many poor developing countries do not have the road and bridge to deliver supporters and goods. From the right graph, you can find that many mothers die in these regions. The number of mothers who die is decreasing now, but it is said that one woman dies every 7 minutes due to pregnancy, childbirth or soon after giving childbirth, especially, in Sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia. (1)

You can find the white line; 2015 Target from the right graph. It means the goal which was decided in MDGs. This is goal to improve the situation as I said in the part of introduction. You can understand
that many countries do not achieve the goal from the graph. The average annual percentage decreasing in the maternal mortality rate was 2.3 percent, but the goal needs 5.5 percent annual decline to meet the MDG target. (2)

**What is MDGs?**

I mentioned ‘MDGs’ many times in this report, but you may not know MDGs. So, I should explain MDGs.

MDGs: Millennium Development Goals is the goal that all 192 United Nations member states and at least 23 international organizations have agreed to achieve by the year 2015. The goals are necessary for all countries (especially developed countries) to achieve international development and develop a global partnership for development. The goals include reducing child mortality rates, fighting and preventing diseases such as AIDS and malaria. Of course, MDGs is essential for supporting mothers in developing countries. The goals have the article of reducing the number of mothers who meet such a dangerous situation. For example, there are goals about reducing the maternal mortality rate and the number of adolescent birth rate, increasing the proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel, and so on. (3)

Many countries and organizations have made efforts to meet the goals and many mothers can become to be supported than before. For example, the number of women who are taken care before giving birth has been increasing in the world. It seems that the goals are meaningful. However, the difference between rural and urban area is big, on the other words, women in the cities can be given better supports than in rural area. The situation is suitable for any regions especially South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. (4) It is said that the goals are good but need much efforts.

**Who support mothers?**

Now, there are many actors who fight against this issue.

Japan has worked the issue as one of developed countries. Japanese government decided to extend up to $ 4 billion in new yen loans over the next five years and set up a $ 2.5 billion fund to help Japanese firms in Africa (2008). Moreover, in this year, Japan held Toyako Summit in Hokkaido, Japan. The leaders from G8 promised to double their aid for African mothers and children to $ 25 billion by 2010. Japan took initiative in discussion. Not only the decision, the governments discuss how to achieve the UN’s MDGs and improve their support to train health-care profession in Africa and other needy regions. After two years, in 2010, Japan decided $ 8.5 billion over five years starting in 2010 to help improve the health of mothers and babies in poor countries, $ 800 million in the budget will be invested in the global fund to fight against AIDS. (5) Japan has made efforts to improve the current situation but some countries have not. For example, Bush gave up investing in the United Nations Fund for Population Activities, the organization which supports mothers in developing countries though the president and the policy changed. (6) Some countries don’t think that the family plan (controlling the number of children and supporting mothers) is advisable because of the religion. However, the way is important for mothers and children to protect their human rights. I think that Japan has to take initiative to support.

Many countries in UN provide some goals including MDGs and many institutions in UN, for example UNICEF, WHO, UNDP, and so on, suggest and advance the policies about this issue. Some governments actively expand and implement ODA; official development assistance for improving mothers’ environments. However, not only governments and international organizations
support mothers. Many enterprises advance projects for them. Recently, UNIQLO and Cath Kidston (this is the famous designer in UK) make donation for supporting safe motherhood program in Zambia by selling clothes. (7) There are many UNIQLO shops all over the world and the clothes are sold in the world. In Japan, many girls, including author, buy the clothes. The clothes and project are popular at least in Japan. And I think that it is good that enterprises proceed with the projects which are suitable for the color of them.

Let’s research more!

• Some governments implement ODA as I mentioned, but the proportion of spending is different according to area. Which part do you think the governments spend best and worst?

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