

# S-face

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## Primary health care: For a world without health inequities

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## The fundamental philosophy of PHC, which does not accept health inequities

My research theme is primary health care (PHC). PHC was defined in accordance with the Declaration of Alma-Ata, drawn up at a joint meeting of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) held in Kazakhstan in Central Asia in September 1978. Specifically, it makes health and medical care more accessible across the world, and is a philosophy and methodology that aims to bring about the realization of improvements in access, fairness, community involvement, and focus on preventive activities in the field of health and medical care worldwide.

The stance of PHC is based on 4 principles: 1. Respect for the needs of people; 2. Community participation; 3. Utilization of community resources; and, 4. Having the community play an active role in developing a comprehensive health care system. The Declaration of Alma-Ata laid out the goal of achieving "Health for all by 2000." I believe that the fundamental ideology behind that is "non-acceptance for health inequities." Regrettably, the specific goals established by the Declaration of Alma-Ata were not achieved by 2000. However, reflecting on that failure and based on the stance of PHC, efforts were made after 2000 to put in place preventive measures for infectious diseases and improve maternal and child health with the aim of reducing the mortality rate of infants and expectant mothers on the global level. In this regard, a certain level of results was achieved in the Southeast Asia region, for example.

## Involvement in the field of health amidst the turbulence of the occupied Palestinian territory

In my practical and research work in the field of PHC, my longest period of involvement has been in the occupied Palestinian territory. In my current position as a health advisor with the Japan International Volunteer Center (JVC), I am involved in projects in East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. Students from SFC are also participating in these projects as a part of their research and practice.

In East Jerusalem, JVC provides medical examinations at school and health education in regions that have become divided by "the wall" constructed by Israel. Of these projects, I am involved in Training of Trainers (ToT), which seeks to nurture leaders who can play an active role in health education in the local community. In cooperation with medical NGOs<sup>(\*)</sup> that have been active in the local community for the past 30 years, we implement educational courses spanning about 20 sessions for students in the health committees at schools, and I provide expert advice on how to make health education proceed more smoothly, and the type of challenges that are faced in the provision of such education. Activities by the local staff are beginning to take root and become established, and our concerns are gradually shifting toward the sustainability of the activities.

Strict restrictions pertaining to the movement of people and goods have been enforced in the Gaza Strip, due to blockades and military attacks by Israel. As a result, there are concerns about malnutrition and anemia among children, as well as the adverse impact on their long-term development. JVC has implemented projects aimed at improving the nutrition of children. Until 2011, the focus of these projects was placed on nutrition education and the provision of locally produced high-iron milk and nutritious biscuits to children in kindergartens. However, they have made the transition to educational activities and the nurturing of leaders who can play an active role in nutrition activities in the region. Since 2002, I have been involved in such support activities.

\* Non-governmental Organization



# Health is a basic right for all people

Assistant Professor Rika Fujiya is involved in community health activities in cooperation with NGOs and other organizations in the occupied Palestinian territory, where war never ceases, as well as other developing countries and areas of conflict around the world.

Her aim is to work together with local residents on practical and research work, and at the same time, pass on her wealth of experience and knowledge to youths of future generations.

She also seeks to put the philosophies of health and human rights established in the Declaration of Alma-Ata into practice.

The research activities undertaken by Prof. Fujiya are the establishment and practice of primary health care that will become the core of global health, which will become increasingly important in the future.

## Activities in Palestine with Japan International Volunteer Center



A building in the Gaza Strip, which came under military attacks in the summer of 2014. While the photograph was taken in January 2015, half a year after the attacks took place, no progress has been made on reconstruction due to limitations in procuring resources from outside of Gaza.



The scene of a health lesson for lower grade children at an elementary school in East Jerusalem, conducted by children from the Health Committee. In such ways, support is provided for creating an environment that allows for health education to be carried out in schools.



Pieces of traditional embroidery handmade by women from Palestine. Developing and selling these products generates income for women suffering under the economic crisis resulting from the conflict.

## Congo Acadex Project by Medical Team



Medical examinations are implemented for children at elementary schools as part of the activities undertaken by the medical team. The doctors, led by professors from School of Medicine, Keio University, provide medical examination services in cooperation with local doctors.

## Overcoming challenges together with the local community

In my position as a university faculty member who is engaged in the research and education of PHC, I am involved in activities in the Democratic Republic of Congo in Africa, as well as in the Lao People's Democratic Republic in Southeast Asia.

The Democratic Republic of Congo Acadex Project is a joint research project that covers the 3 areas of education, architecture, and medicine. Its activities include providing medical examinations at ACADEX Elementary School, providing health education through workshops, and grasping the situation of health in the region.

The Laos Primary Health Care Activity Project is organized as a training program for students. Under this project, students observe and undergo practical training in health projects, in order to learn about the roles and activities of WHO, UNICEF, JICA<sup>(\*)</sup> and other international cooperation entities that are active in Laos, and also stay in villages to provide health education for elementary school children.

Through such education, research, and practice of PHC, I have come to think that "health is a basic right for all people, and health inequities are not to be accepted." As an academic discipline, PHC is confronted by the challenges of continuing support amidst harsh and politically fluid environments such as areas of conflict, and publishing the research results based on evidence. However, I hope to overcome these challenges and create something together with people in the local community.

\* Japan International Cooperation Agency



### Profile Rika Fujiya

Assistant Professor, Faculty of Nursing and Medical Care, Keio University. Completed doctoral course in School of International Health/ Global Health Science, Graduate School of Medicine, the University of Tokyo. Specializes in primary health care, global health, health and human rights.

Please visit S-face website for details!

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