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Norway dubbed best for moms; Japan 32nd

The Daily Yomiuri

Norway has been ranked the best place in the world to be a mother while Japan placed 32nd, according to an annual report issued in commemoration of Mother's Day by Save the Children, a worldwide nonprofit organization for children.

"State of the World's Mothers 2010" compares the well-being of mothers and children in 43 developed nations and 117 developing nations. Its Mothers' Index is calculated from a Women's Index and a Children's Index. The Women's Index is based on a composite of different indices representing women's health, educational, economic and political status, while the Children's Index is based on such factors as the mortality rate of children under 5 years of age and the number of children enrolled in primary school, regardless of age, as a percentage of the total number of children of official primary school age.

Japan appears close to the worst industrialized nation in which to be a mother. It moved down the list from 12th in 2006 to 34th in 2009, although Japan's position rose slightly this year because its mortality figures for children under 5 and enrollment percentages are comparatively good.

It also was boosted by a small improvement in Japanese women's participation in national government, according to the Save the Children Japan. Eleven percent of Japan's lawmakers are women, but this is still far below the 56 percent in Rwanda, 46 percent in Sweden and 40 percent in Norway, the organization added.

Australia was second in the Mother's Index, followed by Iceland and Sweden. The worst country was deemed to be Afghanistan, with Niger, Chad, Guinea-Bissau and Yemen also in the bottom five.

The average Afghan woman has only about four years of education and lives to be just 44. The child mortality rate shows that every mother in Afghanistan is likely to suffer the loss of a child.

The report described conditions for mothers and their children in the bottom 10 countries as "grim." According to the report, one in 23 mothers in these countries dies from pregnancy-related causes, while one in six children dies before their fifth birthday.

On average, one child in three suffers from malnutrition, it says. The report says an additional 4.3 million health workers are needed in developing countries, particularly female health care providers. Husbands and elder family members often decide whether a woman may receive health care in such countries, and may deny permission if the health worker is a man, it said.

(May. 9, 2010)

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What is Masculinity?
Considering Various Ways of
Life for Men

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