

Social and civic competences

The Situation of Women in Poor Countries

The article for the Ligon School Magazine by Michal Garbiec

From ancient times women have been treated differently from men. In our culture such a situation is almost an anachronism, but in some countries there are separate laws for men and women. In the Far East, for example, women don't have the same rights as men. Sometimes they don't even know what their rights are. They are treated like items and in some cases just traded for other items.

In Cambodia, where authorities don't care about their citizens, if women are poor, they don't have any rights. In a marriage, women don't have many rights, either. If a husband just thinks that his wife cheated on him, he can do everything with her, beat her or even do something worse.

In Japan a few centuries ago a kind of prostitute called Geisha existed. Geishas were women who had been taught from an early age how to be an ideal companion for rich men, but not only in a physical way. Geishas also had big knowledge about a wide variety of topics which would interest their client, making them ideal partners for conversations, too. Houses of geishas could be found in almost all bigger cities of Japan, those houses offered and sold Geishas' services, which weren't in any way cheap. That tradition survived only in the history and culture of the Japanese and such a thing as a geisha doesn't exist anymore in modern Japan. Now, women have equal rights with men.

In poor countries of Asia women are also used as cheap labor and are forced to work in facilities producing clothes or shoes, soccer balls and phones etc. These facilities are hired by large western companies. Women and children work more than twelve hours per day and get very little payment for their hard work, often in horrible conditions, without protective suits, toilets or breakfast/lunch breaks. However, they do not have any other options or at least few other options for work and they need work to survive so they cannot change anything.

In many cases governments don't do anything about such situations. This sorry state of affairs can be found in many countries in Asia today. The UN governments provide these countries with the humanitarian aid, but this doesn't change the horrible predicament of women living there.