

Chunichi Shinbun: Chunichi Web Column

The first micro-credit loan was \$27 U.S. dollars for the forty two households. The borrowers pay this amount back when they can. This was thirty three years ago in Bangladesh. No one expected that this would be the first step in changing the world.

Dr. Muhammad Yunus developed the micro-credit system, which provides credit to the poorest population in Bangladesh without any collateral. He started this process to help women in rural villages and later, he founded Grameen Bank. "Grameen" means village houses. Three years ago, Dr. Yunus and the Bank received the Nobel Peace Prize. Poverty reduction will lead to continuous peace.

Again in Bangladesh, there is a new development, which encourages critical thinking. A newly established university, which poor women can attend without worrying about tuition, will start classes this fall. The university is called the Asian University for Women. Kamal Ahmad, a native of Bangladesh, is the founder of AUW, and the university operates on world-wide donations.

The students are not just from Bangladesh. The 129 students include women from Cambodia, Pakistan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka and they are the first generation in their families to attend a university.

The AUW program is five years long. After they graduate, they are expected to return to their home country to become leaders who will change the world. First year student Azmina Karim (19 years old) came to Japan and said she wanted to help students who suffer from autism.

Perhaps, like the Grameen Bank, the hopes and dreams of 129 AUW students will change the world.