

The Happiness of Ordinary Days

Are you happy? Do you feel happy? What is your “norm”? I sleep on a futon, I eat lunch from a bento box, and I study at a public school six days a week. I thought this was how everyone grew up. However, when I became a junior high school student, I realized for the first time that these things are not the norm for everyone.

Poverty, armed conflict, and child labor are just some of the problems in the world today that need to be solved. Recently, I was shocked when I learned about the violence and discrimination against women in parts of Africa.

In 2017, Akazinga was created in Zimbabwe as the first women-only armed anti-poaching unit. Akazinga means “brave” in the local language. It has reduced elephant poaching in Zimbabwe by 80% since its inception. Women who join Akazinga get training similar to the Japan Special Defense Forces. How can they handle such hard training? Many of them come from difficult family environments. Some Akazinga rangers are single mothers who are responsible for supporting their families. Others have been victims of sexual violence or have had other traumatic experiences. These women overcome hard training to fight poachers and protect wildlife. They know the awful pain of being harmed and so have a strong desire to stop animals from being harmed.

There are many people around the world who are fighting to change their lives like the women in Zimbabwe. In Japan, we can live peacefully and happily. The fact that we are alive is not something to be taken for granted, but something incredibly special and unique. I think it can be difficult for many Japanese people to recognize “happiness” because it is always around us. It is only when we are aware of our own happiness that we can better understand the people who are fighting for change. It is not a guarantee that we will eat, go to school, or have families. It is important to realize this, learn about the world and make positive changes.