

Recommendations

**Women, Young People, Seniors and Foreigners hold
the Key to Re-Creating an Open and Energetic Japan**

Japanese Council on Population /Akashi Research Group

President: Yasushi Akashi

December 2014

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This set of recommendations was prepared by Japanese Council on Population (JCP) /Akashi Research Group (chaired by Yasushi Akashi, JCP President).

For the past year, beginning in January 2013, the Group has held a series of study meetings to discuss the theme “Recommendations for an Energetic Japan – Women and Youth hold the key” based on research presented by experts in various different fields.

It is hoped that the Recommendations will be discussed by a broad range of people, and effectively used for policy making by the legislative body, national and local governments, the media and civil society.

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Recommendations

Women, Young People, Seniors and Foreigners hold the Key to Re-Creating an Open and Energetic Japan

◆Preface

Seismic change is occurring in the population, the base of Japanese society. Because of the progress of super low fertility, Japan has now entered the age of population decline, and it has become clear that its population will undergo an extraordinary ageing process along with decreasing births. After reaching its peak in December 2008 with 128,099,000, the population has continued to decline.

Population decline will result in lowered consumption due to the contracting of the domestic market, and a rising labor shortage due to the declining productive population. This decline will extend across the whole nation but be concentrated in certain local areas. The scale of population decline is a serious concern, but even more alarming is the precipitous speed of the decline. The existing organizations, systems and social infrastructure must be urgently restructured to meet the decreasing population. In May 2014, the Japan Policy Council published a list of 896 municipalities which are likely to “disappear” in the coming decades which had a strong impact across the whole of society. It helped people to recognize afresh that population decline is an imminent issue and there is an urgent need for taking serious measures to cope with it.

The continued progression of the super aged society will create a far greater demand for elderly care and impose greater burdens on society to respond to these demands. Although healthy longevity is being sought, there exist gaps between average life expectancy (80.21 years for men and 86.61 years for women in 2013) and “healthy life expectancy,” with men reportedly spending nine years and women 12 years in unhealthy conditions.

Even though there have been signs in the past few years of minor shifts upward in super low birthrates, which are a major cause of super population ageing and population decline, these shifts have not been nowhere near large enough to effect a significant turnaround in future population trends. In addition, the social distortions causing extraordinary low fertility have not been properly rectified.

In order to address problems in an age of demographic change, it is vital that

measures be undertaken in the realms of social systems and economy and technology, but in this proposal, the major focus will be placed on methods to secure human resources.

We are confident that young people with a promising future, talented women and experienced seniors will be able to lead Japan into a brighter future. We also need to consider accepting more foreign working people from a long-term and national perspective.

The Japanese Council on Population /Akashi Research Group held a series of study meetings in FY2013-14 to bring together the knowledge of experts in related fields, and members shared an understanding that it was essential that we consider how an “open and energetic Japan.” can be made a reality. Every member of our group is firmly committed to the belief that we need to change the framework of related fields boldly.

It is the political power and leadership of people engaged in politics that can help shape the socio-economic base of Japan. A wide range of partnerships and cooperation among academia, economic circles, the media, and civil society will act as strong support for this endeavor.

We, members of the Japanese Council on Population (JCP) /Akashi Research Group through the recommendations in “Women, Young People, Seniors and Foreigners hold the Key to Re-Creating an Open and Energetic Japan” strongly call for effective and maximum use of human resources in Japanese society.

I would like to extend my deepest appreciation to Prof. Makoto Atoh, JCP Secretary General and other experts for their expertise and advice in preparing this document. I should be more than pleased as the chairperson of the Group if this set of recommendations were to provide a useful resource for discussions to re-create an open and energetic Japan in the legislative body, governments, the media and civil society.

December 2014

Yasushi Akashi,
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Chairperson, Akashi Research Group

Recommendation 1: Measures to Combat Declining Fertility

◆ Introduction

A list of municipalities identified as being at risk of disappearing was published in May 2014. Municipalities with the risk of disappearing refers to those cities, towns or villages in which the number of women of age between 20 to 39 will decrease by more than 50 percent of the level of 2010 in 30 years time. In 2040, it is predicted that 49.8 percent (896 of 1800 municipalities including cities designated by ordinance) will reach a level at which the risk of disappearing is high (estimate by the Japan Policy Council, Sub-committee on Population Decline, chaired by Mr. Hiroya Masuda, former Minister of Internal Affairs and Communications). This news had a strong impact on society at large, and led to the adoption of the “Emergency Declaration on Low Fertility” at the meeting of the National Governors’ Association in 2014 which demanded decisive government policies to try and halt the decline in fertility.

One indicator of declining fertility is the total fertility rate (TFR), the estimated number of children that a woman will have in her life. In the period from the mid-1950s to the mid-1970s TFRs remained at the replacement level (it varies depending on mortality rate but most recently TFR 2.07), but it reached the lowest at 1.26 in 2005 after which it has shown some modest recovery. Even so, it was 1.43 in 2013, far below the replacement level and the number of births 1,029,800 was the lowest since demographic statistics began.) According to demographic analysis, the direct causes for declining fertility are the trends of late marriage and non-marriage, but it is also influenced by the fact that married couples are having a smaller number of children.

◆ Reproductive Health/Rights and Measures to Combat Declining Fertility

The current state of population caused by low fertility (population decline and super ageing), and the economic and social impact of this on the social security system, in particular, are grave concerns in Japan. In preparing policies on fertility, the importance of reproductive health and rights must be taken into consideration. This is a central concept of the “Programme of Action” for solving population issues adopted by 179 states including Japan at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) held in Cairo in 1994. It is a basic human right for individuals and couples to be responsible for the decision on whether to have children or not, how to space childbirths and the number of children to have.

Recently, recommendations are being made to maintain the Japanese population at around 100 million in 50 years from now, and to raise TFRs to 2.07 by 2030 to realize this goal. However it is not desirable from the

perspective of reproductive health and rights to set forth numerical targets for births and fertility. Doing so may adversely impose on women the feeling of being pressured to have children. Since Japan has agreed on the adoption of the “Programme of Action,” and has strongly advocated women’s rights of self-determination, the rights of each individual to make their own decisions on reproduction should be respected as a matter of priority.

The social constraints that inhibit people from bearing children as they desire must be removed, and the patterns of social conditioning that encourage the concepts of gender inequality that lie behind these constraints in Japanese society need be removed. Therefore the government should push forward family policies to develop an environment where people are able to have and rear their children without difficulty and that it should never aim merely to achieve numerical population targets.

Year 2014 is the 20th year since ICPD. The Japanese government should reconfirm the importance of the “Programme of Action” focusing on reproductive health and rights and continue to support the Programme. In parallel, efforts should be made to spread the meaning of reproductive health and rights to the public.

◆Measures to Combat Declining Fertility

– Favorable Environment for Child Care

In developing policies to combat declining fertility, emphasis should be placed not on having children per se but on creating a favorable environment for having and rearing children, and on supporting individuals’ life plans. In such an environment, it should be taken for granted that working women will be able return to their workplaces after having taken their prenatal and postnatal leave, and opportunities for promotion should not be lost because of having taken maternity leave and childcare leave. Currently full-time employees are entitled to take six months maternity leave at two thirds of their previous salary. However this benefit is not extended to non-regular employees who make up 36.6 percent of all employees (Labor Force Survey 2014, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications). In addition, The problems of long working hours and instability of employment among men in a childrearing generation must be solved, so that a favorable working environment for both men and women can be developed. At the same time, the development of a working environment that encourages more men to take paternity leave is urgently required.

The most frequently cited reason for couples limiting the number of children is the cost, particularly the educational cost, of raising children. According to the “International Comparison of Education Indexes 2013” (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology). The financial burden of formal education which individuals have to bear is high in Japan following

Korea. In order to alleviate the burden, it is proposed that the scholarship system up to the university level be improved, and steps be taken to gradually make formal education free be taken, as is already the case in some countries.

Since the biological reproductive capability of women lowers with age, there are increasing numbers of couples who are not able to have children as they desire, or those who are worried about infertility. Therefore, information and education on age and childbirth are necessary from a medical viewpoint. However, in societies where gender inequality has not been eliminated, due consideration should be given to avoiding pressurizing women to have children at a younger age by over-emphasizing the problem of the age of women.

◆ **Comprehensive Education on Reproductive Health and Rights of Young People**

There are not enough opportunities for comprehensive sexual education covering the securing of reproductive health and rights for young people to have them consider how to live as individuals and how to form their personality. One importance consequence of this is that, the cases of unwanted pregnancies, induced abortions, and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) among young people have shown little decline.

However it should be realized that sexual education that focuses merely on limiting sexual behavior will not constitute an adequate response to their needs. The promotion of comprehensive sexual education according to age and the stage of growth which is useful for the sound development of young people will help them to smoothly transit to adulthood.

◆ **Gender Partnership and Building a Society Supportive of Childbirth**

The most commonly offered response to the question for having undergone an induced abortion was “Because I am not married, so I cannot give birth” (30.2 %) (6th Survey on Life and Consciousness of Men and Women, 2014;Japan Family Planning Association). This clearly shows that the consciousness that childbirths should occur only within married life is still strong among the Japanese.

In contrast, in developed European countries, the rates of births out of wedlock are on the rise. In Sweden, such births constituted 39.7percent of all births in 1980 and rose to 54.5 percent in 2012. In France, the rate jumped from 11.4 percent in 1980 to 55.8 percent in 2012, similarly in Denmark, from 33.2 percent to 50.6 percent. In Italy where the number of births out of wedlock has been said to be relatively small, the rate increased six-fold from 4.3 percent to 28.0 percent. Whereas in Japan, although there

have been some signs of changes the rate has risen from 0.8 percent to 2.2 percent, the social environment to accept births outside marriage still has yet to be developed. In France where the non-married birthrate increased by five times in 30 years, TFR recovered from 1.66 in 1993 to 2.0 in 2012. In other words, those developed countries with relatively high birthrates tend to have higher rates of births outside marriage (Demographic Statistics, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, and Eurostat).

Discussions among all walks of life are required on the issues of gender partnership and relations between childbirths/childcare and the marriage system. The development of the social system is necessary to support people giving birth to children regardless of their marital status and so that they do not suffer social or economic disadvantages.

Recommendation 2:

Gender Equality and Enhancement of the Status of Women

◆ Introduction

The number of women in higher education, including universities, has been increasing. In recent years the gender gap among university students is greatly narrowing (male 309,000 and female 250,000 according to the Statistical Abstract of Education, Science and Culture 2014). As a result, women's participation in society has advanced, and their entry into the work force is steadily increasing. Without women, the continued economic strength of Japan is not possible. Since the enforcement of the Equal Employment Opportunity Law in 1986, working environment for women has been improved. Gender discrimination has been, at least in principle, abolished at the time of recruitment and employment by corporations. The demotions and transfer of women due to their pregnancies and childbirths are prohibited. Although the Abe government encourages the promotion of women to managerial positions, the actual rate of female managers is still extremely low in comparison with other developed countries. The employment of women and their full participation in workplaces should be further improved.

It should not be overlooked that the rates of female managers and politicians (national parliament, prefectural and municipal assemblies, governors and mayors) are low in comparison with both developed and developing countries. Moreover, the number of women in regular employment has remained at the same level in recent years, while the rate of women leaving their jobs at the time of the birth of the first child remains almost unchanged (the so-called M-shape employment line). This situation represents a tremendous waste of human resources. It is extremely important to build a society where people are able to have and rear children while continuing their

employment.

◆ Ensuring the Full Participation of Women in the Workforce

To promote gender equality, and encourage employment and active participation of women, the policies of the government and private corporations play an important role. Successful examples in revising employment conditions can be observed in other industrialized countries. Japan should introduce relevant measures from countries which have been able to realize gender equality.

We consider it encouraging that the Japanese government has been urging the preparation of relevant policies and laws under the policy “greater utilization of women is indispensable.” We wholeheartedly welcome the fact that the Abe government places the activity and utilization of women in the center of its growth strategy.

The male-centered organizational culture that prevails in almost all vocational fields in Japan is a major hindrance to promoting gender equality. Whether or not we will be able to build a truly gender equal society for coming generations depends on the strength and determination of the present generation.

◆ Supporting the Social Progress of Women

The gender equality index ranks Japan 104 out of 142 countries (World Economic Forum, October 2014). This is an international evaluation about Japanese women’s social progress, participation and opportunity in economic activities as well as political activities (number of parliament members, etc.) Iceland is ranked and five Nordic countries are included in the top 10 countries. Nation-wide discussions are needed to examine why there are fewer opportunities for women to reach higher positions, to make contributions and, to take relevant measures.

Considering the current status of women, who make up more than half of the total population, Japan can hardly “occupy an honored place in an international society” as stated in the preamble of the Constitution. In spite of the decision by the Headquarters for Promotion of Gender Equality in 2003 “to increase women in managerial positions to 30 percent by 2020” (Basic Plan for Gender Equality), we are still far below the target 10 years later. Efforts to achieve the target should be accelerated and, it is preferable that the target be achieved even before the target year.

The survey by the Inter-Parliamentary Union in 2013 shows that the ratio of women in the lower house is 44.7 percent in Sweden, and 39.6 percent in Norway, while it is as small as 7.9 percent in Japan. According to the Alliance of Feminist Representatives 2013, the number of municipal

assemblies without a single female representative was 26 percent.

It has been suggested that the time is now right to introduce a quota system to effect gender equality in the political sphere. Active and wide-ranging discussions may be necessary as to its adequacy.

We are firmly committed to the belief that women should participate more fully in all aspects of society in the 21st century and that “a Japanese society where women can shine” should be realized.

◆Realizing and Promoting Work, Life and Care Balance

A society in which people can maintain an adequate balance between work and personal life or family life, generally speaking, can lead to a wholesome society with sound citizens who are able to become a driving force for social and economic activities. Nordic countries which have achieved established positions as advanced industrial countries and welfare states, offer good examples to serve as our models.

It has been widely pointed out that overtime work in Japan is an inefficient practice from various viewpoints, and that productivity can be enhanced in organized and efficient ways without working overtime. The time currently spent on working overtime could be spent for cultural activities or enjoying hobbies to enrich one’s personal life, or for taking care of children and doing housework together with partners. A society in which people maintain a work life balance can become a women-friendly society facilitating their participation in social life. Furthermore, as seen in cases in Nordic countries, it can be expected that fertility may remain relatively high.

This idea will require managers to change their attitudes to employment practices. The lifestyle and working style of people who find their *raison d’être* in a work life should not be denied at all, but rather spread more widely among the whole population.

Furthermore, we propose a society that fulfills the balance of three aspects of work, personal life and care including childcare and elderly care. To realize a sustainable society, “care” should be added. As those who are leaving their workplaces to care for elderly family members are increasing in number, care is a pressing requirement in the aging society.

Recommendation 3: The Importance of Young People

◆Introduction

Those people who were taking casual jobs in succession or those who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) in their 20s are now

entering their 40s.

We must face this fact with grave concern. Unless the conditions of employment are improved, young people are likely to lose their future orientation. Globalization and the increasing numbers of non-regular employees, such as temporary workers dispatched by manpower agencies and workers under contracts of fixed-term employment as a result of the relaxation of employment regulations are becoming serious socio-economic problems. Unstable employment status is recognized as a major cause of late marriage and non-marriage among young people.

◆Securing Stable Employment for Young People

Policy measures must be devised to squarely confront the fact that human resources are not being fully utilized. As will be stated later, the introduction of workers from other countries may be considered feasible, but at the same time, the existing human resources must be examined more closely.

The destabilization of employment and impoverishment are important issues for young people, and these are regarded as an important cause of low fertility. Creating stable employment for young people will lead to stronger economic activity. After the stability of their living is secured, their future orientation will be strengthened and they will begin to look for life partners.

◆Expansion of Opportunities for Marriage

– Local Town Revitalization through “matchmaking events”

The national census in 2010 revealed that the ratio of life-time non-marriage (unmarried at age 50) is 20.1 percent among men and 10.6 percent among women.

According to the 14th Japanese National Fertility Survey 2010, the most frequently cited reply from respondents between age 25 and 34 for “not marrying” is “Because I have not meet an adequate partner-to-be.” Although individual persons must make efforts to find their spouses, many experts estimate that the proportions of never-marrying people will possibly rise among both men and women. However, if this does not imply that a desire for marriage has declined among the young, but that they have not married “because of the paucity of opportunities to meet a potential partner,” there should be room for improving the current situation in favor of supporting their marriage.

If a decline in the rate of marriages is one cause of low fertility, a positive influence may be given on marriage rates by increasing Marriage Counseling Centers, or opportunities and places providing Marriage Counseling across

the country. The managing bodies of such facilities or programs may vary from one locality to another.

In recent years, some local governments and non-profit organizations in different localities have become conducting matchmaking programs for young people involving eating and drinking houses in shopping districts with an additional purpose to revitalize their business activities. Other localities can learn from successful examples.

◆ **Supporting the Cultural Entrepreneurship of Young People**

It has been a long time since it was first said that many Japanese young people have missed opportunities to cultivate their international mindedness. Since the Japanese employment system leads to young people being employed right after their graduation from university, it often happens that youth cannot express great dreams or even have dreams.

On the other hand, Japanese young people are very motivated in creative activities in culture, arts, and pop culture and have been highly successful.

One example is the creation and spread of the new “Cool Japan.” The economic model of mass production and mass consumption that supported the rapid economic growth of Japan in the 20th century has already become obsolete. If Japan is to be successful in creating new culture, we need to begin with building a social system to backup youth engaged in cultural creation. We would like to see the further evolution of “Cool Japan” by mobilizing resources from governmental, educational and private sectors.

Since aspects of Japanese culture such as Japanese cuisine, pop culture, manga-and-animation culture, video game culture, traditional techniques have led to the creation of new industries, the development of and support for youth-centered cultural entrepreneurship beyond the conventional primary, secondary and tertiary industries will become necessary. This notion will likely affect the existing school system.

We may be at the point where we must tackle a new and challenging work to develop social arrangements to support young entrepreneurs who are developing new forms of youth culture.

◆ **Improving the Ability of Young People to Communicate Internationally**

The loss of interest among Japanese young people in international affairs is often mentioned as a problem today. It is clearly reflected in the fall of the number of young Japanese going out of this country. for example to study abroad. This is in sharp contrast to China and Korea whose students at major American universities like Harvard are increasing rapidly.

According to the Institute of International Education in the United States, the number of Japanese students in the United States has fallen from 46,960 to 19,568 in the decade to 2012/13. One reason for this is because young people in Japan are content with their current life in Japan and lack the courage to study abroad. Further, overprotective attitudes by parents may be discouraging young people from studying in overseas universities.

In order to raise the foreign language proficiency, particularly of English, to the international standard, education of English as a second language should be further strengthened. Rather than purely language education, the focus should be on helping young people to acquire more effective and comprehensive communication skills in the international community. In other words, not only foreign language proficiency, but also the development of a critical mind to see diverse problems in the contemporary world, knowledge, as well as responsiveness to different cultures and historic understanding must be acquired.

Such education will raise the ability of Japanese people to work resiliently in other countries and regions, and to expand their capacity to utilize their skills in other countries. As a result, Japan's contribution will be extended more positively in the international labor market and international cooperation to developing countries.

There is a strong need for the government and business corporations to give greater support to increase the number of youth studying in other countries, and to expand the system to support students intending to study abroad.

Recommendation 4: Creating Bold Initiatives for Active Ageing

◆Introduction

The population estimate (mean birthrate and death rate in January 2012) by the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research showed that the number of Japanese over the age of 65 will amount to 33,950,000 when postwar baby boomers (born between 1947 to 1949) become 65 years old and over in 2015, and the elderly population will continue to increase until it reaches a peak with 38,780,000 in 2042, and after which the elderly population is estimated to decline. The elderly population over the age of 75 in 2012 was 15,190,000 but it will increase to 21,790,000 in 2025 when the "postwar baby boomers" become older than 75 years old. This is known as the "2025 Crisis" in medical and elderly care communities.

As a result of the increase in the number of elderly people in the declining population, the rate of ageing (proportion of people over age 65) is estimated to continue rising from 25.1 percent (one out of four) in 2013 to 33.4 percent (one out of three) in 2035. Even after the number of elderly people begins to

decrease in 2042, the rate of aging is estimated to rise, reaching 39.9 percent in 2060. For the first time there will be a society in which one out of 2.5 persons will be 65 years and older. The portion of people over 75 years old will also continue to rise and in 2060 when the children of postwar baby boomers (those born between 1971 and 1974) will have become 75 years and older, they will occupy 26.9 percent of the population and more than one out of four is expected to be over age 75.

The social security crisis is a grave concern because of the super ageing society. Urgent measures must be taken to respond to anxiety about the sustainability of pension schemes, the rapid increase of people in need of medical and nursing care services, and the shortage of facilities and service providers and caretakers. In particular, focused discussions on the measures for the late-stage elderly (over age 75) are required.

Japan has the highest ratio of aged population in the world. As such, policies and measures taken in Japan are being closely watched by developing countries including Southeast Asian countries which are following Japan in becoming Super-ageing societies. One possible model of elderly people is those who are practicing “Active Ageing” (getting older while continuing to participate in social activities without lowering their quality of life). Japan is a “forerunner” of aged societies in the world and at the same time, a country faced with challenges that other countries have never experienced. It is therefore expected that Japan will strive resolutely to meet various challenges, and put forward policies to present a model of an aged society in which elderly people can be more actively involved.

◆ Expand Working Places and Opportunities for Seniors

The image of the elderly should be one that represents them as still able to play a contributory role in society, and places and opportunities should be created that encourage the elderly to work as much as possible according to their physical and health conditions.

First, it is essential to mobilize the wisdom of people of relevant sectors to consider how people over 65 years old can work. They may be able to start businesses or non-profit organizations on the basis of their work experiences before retirement. Participation in economic activities by the elderly will not simply help them contribute to economic activities, but will also promote their healthy long life and enhance their “purpose in life.” Such workplaces will not be at the cost of youth employment; rather, the employment opportunities will be expanded as a whole. It should be possible to build a society in which the elderly and youth can live and work together.

As the “Healthy Japan 21” proposes, greater efforts should be made to prolong healthy years in old age, to narrow the gaps between healthy life expectancy and average life expectancy. We should aim to build a society

where people can work at least until they are 75 years old.

◆ **Development of Community Level Businesses for Seniors**

Local governments should plan to increase employment opportunities suitable to the elderly. Many municipalities are providing elderly people with employment opportunities by selling their produce, handmade food and other items at roadside rest areas designated by the government along major roads and highways. Citizens and local governments should be able to develop many more ideas to create such working opportunities at the community level. New potentialities may emerge from concepts such as “One Village One Item,” and creating “Taste of a Home Town” and “Features of a Home Town.”

In urban sectors, businesses can be created for seniors. For example, cleaning work in parks and public facilities, tour guides, and temporary employment businesses making use of their experience in white collar work are feasible. What is needed today is to canvas ideas on a broad basis to make effective use of capable elderly people. The national and local governments should offer positive support in the process of realizing these ideas as businesses. A “town development or village development movement” should be launched, calling for citizens to act together. Many retired people desire to have some income through working.

◆ **Promotion of International Cooperation by Baby Boomer Generation**

The postwar baby boomers who are older than 65 years old today are the people who produced Japan’s rapid economic growth. Many of them are proud to have contributed to making Japan what it is today. The skills and technologies developed by this generation can be evaluated as “appropriate technology” applicable to developing countries taking into account the environment, culture and practice, and socio-economic background of recipient communities. It is feasible that multi-generational teams combining elderly people with useful skills and techniques and physically strong young people can work in developing countries as technical transfer groups.

In particular, bicycle manufacturing, automobile industry including repair techniques, electronic equipment industry, and garment manufacturing are promising industries as are agricultural and fisheries technology and environmental conservation technology. The transfer of appropriate technology to developing countries will facilitate economic development in recipient countries and help develop capable persons there. Through such international cooperation, we will be able to develop a concept of “co-prospering” in the international community instead of regarding countries as places to sell or buy things.

Through technological transfer, we can also contribute to human resource development in developing countries. Efforts in this direction are actually being made using official development assistance (ODA) through the Senior Volunteer scheme by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). In the future, similar projects should be developed by the private sector. Human resource development in developing countries requires not only government assistance but also the knowledge and skills from the private sector. By employing retired persons from the private sector in technology transfer programs, they will be able to obtain income and their capabilities will be effectively utilized.

There are cases where retired workers and capable engineers have left their work before their retirement age and have been “head-hunted” on a personal basis by private corporations in emerging developing countries. It is proof that individuals with high technical skills and ingenuity in Japan are greatly valued by people outside of Japan. It is not only products that we can sell to the world. International cooperation programs by retired people may serve as the beginning of an age to “sell persons with technical skills.” We hope that a new system will be created so that capable retired persons can be sent overseas. Such programs will be able to act as a “bridge” between Japan and developing countries, and provide retired persons with a purpose of life.

◆ **Building Healthy Long-life Communities and Longevity seen from Health**

Japan currently has one of the longest life expectancies in the world. We can be proud of the fact that not only the average life expectancy but also “healthy life expectancy” is being extended. Japanese elderly people are highly health conscious.

In Nagano and Shizuoka prefectures in which both men and women live longer than others, the idea of “working one’s whole life” is widespread among the people, and their efforts in building the image of people truly fulfilling a “healthy life expectancy” are noteworthy. “Working one’s whole life” cannot be achieved over night, however, we can find many hints for healthy maintenance of the elderly in these prefectures. The idea of preventive medicine is widely shared and systematized publicly. The rate of people attending health checkups is high, which promotes the early detection and treatment of diseases, leading to the reduction of medical costs both for the prefectures and people. Municipalities in these prefectures encourage people to exercise and manage their nutrition, and every elderly person has high health awareness.

In regard to “life prolonging therapy” in an excessive manner disregarding the dignity of individual patients, an environment should be developed to allow patients and their families to choose dignified and natural death (at home or in other places of their desire). It is important to discuss this with the elderly patient to find his/her desire and will while they are healthy. Rather than simply providing life-prolonging therapy, applying “palliative

therapy” and allowing patients to take their courses to normal death can be desirable from the perspective of human dignity. Discussions to set forth guidelines to control excessive medical care will become necessary. These should include the viewpoints of the individual patients’ dignity and personal pride.

◆Improvement of the Living Environment and the Encouragement of Multi-generation Collective Houses

The number of elderly people who are living by themselves is increasing. Many young people are also living alone. Housing conditions for young couples are not favorable. Therefore, a model residential complex should be established to allow people who do not belong to the same family to live together. The Share House system by private initiative is already in place, and this system can be expanded to multiple generation housing. It may require someone who can act as a facilitator to smooth communication and help develop the sense of community among residents. Furthermore, he/she may be able to provide elderly residents with opportunities to take part in social activities and socially contributory activities. Apart from providing housing for the elderly, encouraging housing complexes for people of multiple generations, or multi-generational share houses, may provide the basis for community building in the near future.

It should be taken into consideration that many elderly people living by themselves have no wish to leave their own houses. Various support should be offered to help them continue to live where they are now. Services and activities could include home-visits and telephone calls by neighboring people and welfare workers, community bus service and community center activities, networks of medical care facilities and communities.

Recommendation 5:

Immigration Policy in an Age of Population Decline

◆Introduction

A wide range of challenges are becoming apparent in Japan as its population continues to decline. They include the introduction of foreign workers with accompanying development of laws relevant to the immigration policy, the establishment of a government agency responsible for immigrants, and more broadly, the development of social preparedness and building people’s understanding and consensus to accept immigrants. We consider it high time that we had nationwide discussions on the immigration policy adequate to Japan on mid- and long-term perspectives to cope with its population

decline. As a practical issue, a proposal of receiving “200,000 foreign workers every year” until the organization of the Olympics and Paralympics in 2020 has been made. We need to begin serious discussions on a broad basis immediately.

Many European countries which have accepted foreign workers to respond to their manpower shortages have experienced and are still facing problems at the community level and political issues when the body of immigrants becomes a certain size of population. As an example, policies and measures taken for 4 million Turkish people in Germany do not appear to have been smoothly implemented even today. Taking lessons from many of these countries, we should be able to promote calm discussions. As seen in western European countries, accepting foreign workers will mean not simply receiving workers, but being engaged in complicated procedures to accept people with different cultures, customs and religions. Historically, Japan has never been positive to receiving immigrants. Therefore, we need to examine this problem in its various aspects and prepare ways to receive them. In other words, we need to build proper and practical processes and systems to allow foreigners to get accustomed to life in Japan. Is Japanese society fully matured? How will Japanese react to a situation where foreign people are living as their neighbors? How can Japanese catch up with the process of internationalization of their neighborhood? Can people become accustomed to such an environment? Discussions on these questions for living in a multi-cultural society should be carried out. In addition, education on cross-cultural life is required. Early proactive and comprehensive measures should be taken by local administrative authorities and education-related institutions before problems arise once the foreign population reaches a certain scale.

It can be anticipated that the demand for care workers created by the increase in the number of people over 75 will greatly outstrip the supply of workers able to meet that need. Actually, there is a barrier to introducing foreign workers as social welfare personnel today. Immediate measures are needed to solve this issue. A basic plan and basic policy measures to facilitate the planned introduction of foreign workers and immigrants must be formulated through government and private cooperation. It will be a tremendous challenge for the historically closed and exclusive Japanese society to turn to a flexible and tolerant society.

◆Immigration Policies that are Suitable for Japan

As mentioned before, the first priority in solving labor shortages should be placed on the employment of women, youth, and elderly people. Inviting foreign workers and immigrants will be of second importance. However, as many difficulties are foreseen in accepting them, proactive measures should be seriously considered from mid-term and long-term perspectives.

We propose that the policy of introducing foreign workers be implemented step by step upon undergoing multifaceted examination on the impact on the basic Japanese society and culture instead of introducing foreign workers as unskilled labor to meet short-term needs. Instead of receiving foreign workers or immigrants just to supplement the need for unskilled labor, we need to consider the promotion of economic development of Japan without lowering its international competitiveness and vitality, and at the same time, without weakening the social cohesion and cultural density of the Japanese more than necessary. Preference should be given to people with the intellectual and professional skills which are indispensable for the Japanese economy.

As demand for civil engineering and construction projects is increasing now for the reconstruction work after the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011, and for the preparation for the Olympics and Paralympics in 2020, the introduction of foreign workers to supply the labor force in the construction industry is considered. As such, serious discussions are even more necessary. Even if a portion of foreign workers are introduced as short-term laborers, elaborate preparations should be made to receive them. As a matter of course, working conditions for foreign workers, and developing favorable relations with Japanese society should be thoroughly examined beforehand. At present it is difficult to feel that thorough discussions are being held in the parliament, the media or civil society.

We should not simply say “No” to unskilled workers and “Yes” to intellectual professionals. Considering the workforce shortage which is anticipated on a long-term perspective, such as elderly care providers, systems to receive foreign workers must be positively and carefully established. However, the existing barriers to secure care providers for the elderly and disabled have yet to be overcome. The language barrier should not be used as the sole reason to suspend the introduction of people to work as care workers. It is too clear, along with the internationalization of Japanese businesses, that they will need more employees with competence to work in the global market. First, policy measures and incentive measures are keenly desired taking into account the positive employment of capable foreigners who have graduated from universities and graduate schools in Japan.

By having an immigration policy that is suitable for Japan, the systematic and strategic acceptance of immigrants will become possible. Further, wide-ranging discussions in partnership with business communities and people are needed to prepare articulate guidelines for relevant sectors, such as construction, nursing care, services and retail sales, agriculture, forestry and fisheries, etc.). At the same time, the current Technical Intern Training Program must be reviewed.

Japan obviously is still reluctant politically and culturally to accept workers and immigrants from other countries. However, it cannot be denied that

competition is already taking place in the international community to obtain excellent workers from other countries. It is clear that that excellent workers will head to countries where foreigners are more favorably accepted with advantageous conditions.

◆A Strategy to Revitalize Japan

The Strategy to Revitalize Japan revised by the government in June 2014, proposes the “Employment of foreigners” along with the “Promotion of employment of women, Young People and Seniors.” In addition it recommends that “Japan should not aim for an economic boom, but strive for the drastic reform of the socio-economic structure, through accepting diverse cultures to be able to become more integrated with the international community” while making efforts to help the economy fully recover on the growth track toward 2020 when the Olympics and Paralympics are due to be held. This proposal is welcome.

However, it is surprising that the Technical Intern Training Program (TITP) which is to be “dramatically reviewed”, is assigned such a central role for the employment of foreign workers in the strategy. In order for Japan “to become integrated into the international community by accepting various cultures,” as stated in the Strategy, we must formulate the immigration policy seriously on the premise of the permanent residence of foreigners in Japan. Therefore, we propose that in reviewing TITP, “reform in the system itself” be made instead of “reform in its management.” Specifically, the clause “Prohibition of transfer of working place” should be deleted. Prohibition of workplace transfer will be a violation of the basic human rights of foreigners. Overlooking the current conditions prohibiting transfer of workplace and forcing them to work in severe working conditions must not be tolerated.

The number of technical trainees under the TITP program is currently 150,000, and it is expected to increase considerably in coming years. There would be foreign workers who will have acquired Japanese language skills as well as techniques. There should be a system whereby these capable workers can continue working in Japan after the period of training and further live in Japan permanently.

The Japan Reactivation Strategy considers the employment of foreign students in Japan providing them with intern training under TITP, in addition to receiving certified care workers from abroad under the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) and TITP. It suggests that a new framework will be established to allow them to stay in Japan as certified care workers, and allow foreign students to be employed in Japan upon obtaining the national qualification as care providers. Caregiving and household work are personal service work which requires a certain level of Japanese proficiency. Therefore, a language training system and a system in which

human rights concerns are fully considered are demanded.

◆Development of a Comprehensive Immigration Law and Establishment of an Immigration Agency

The population will decrease by 40 million by 2060, and it is said that Japan will become a super aged society. At present there are over 2 million foreign residents in Japan who have been granted the right of permanent residence. They are immigrants in reality, but there is no “Immigration Law.”

We should not forget that in the past Japan sent a great number of immigrants abroad. In Brazil, Peru and other countries in Latin America, Hawaii and west coast states in the United States, there are mature Japanese communities that have made a great contribution both economically and culturally to their respective host countries after having undergone periods of great difficulty. Looking back upon their histories filled with struggles we can see that they had to wait until the second or third generation until they were assimilated into their host countries. It needs to be understood that the acceptance and settlement of immigrants will be a long-term undertaking.

People with Korean nationality and Chosen-seki (those who immigrated from the Korean peninsula before the end of WWII and who have not obtained South Korean nationality), the most familiar foreigners living in Japan, and the descendants of Japanese immigrants to Latin America who have come to work in Japan more than two decades ago are now living as our neighbors. Examining the immigration laws and their administration in countries in Europe and North America, we can observe both advantages and disadvantages in accepting immigrants.

Accepting immigrants is the first step for this country to become a multiethnic society, which will be an unavoidable reality in the future. In this process, an “Immigration Law” incorporating social integrity measures is necessary as a legal framework. Furthermore, an Immigration Agency will need to be established to efficiently enforce the Law. In practice, Japanese language education, vocational training, education for children of foreign families, and improvement of the social security and welfare system will be needed. With a picture of multicultural Japan, a comprehensive policy vision including the provision of suffrage to immigrants is required. It should be emphasized that the creation of new systems and their implementation is dependent on the leadership of politicians who have the necessary foresight to meet these challenges.

List of Study Meetings

“Recommendations for an Energetic Japan – Women and Young People hold the key”

Date	Theme	Presenters
Jan. 25, 2013	Challenges of an ageing society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Sagaza, Haruo (Professor Emeritus, Waseda University) ●Kato, Hisakazu (Professor, School of Political Science and Economics, Meiji University)
March 6, 2013	Youth Employment: Its challenges and countermeasures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Nambu, Yasuyuki (CEO, Pasona Group Inc.) ●Kosugi, Reiko (Research Director, Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training)
May 17, 2013	Background of low fertility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Kitamura, Kunio (Chairperson, Japan Family Planning Association and Director, Family Planning Research Center) ●Sato, Ryuzaburo (Visiting Researcher, Institute of Economic Research, Chuo University)
June 27, 2013	Lessons from Nordic countries to combat low fertility and population ageing: women’s social participation, and accepting foreign workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Ogawa, Gotaro (Former Ambassador to Denmark) ●Seo, Masaki (Former Ambassador to Norway)
Sept.20, 2013	Enhancement of women’s status in Japan: My proposals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Utsumi, Fusako (President, National Women’s Education Center of Japan)
Nov. 29, 2013	Consideration on Japanese-style immigration policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Suzuki, Eriko (Associate Professor, Faculty of Letters, Education Subject, Kokushikan University) ●Hayashi, Reiko (Director, Department of International Research and Cooperation, National Institute of Population and Social Security Research)

The ideas in these recommendations were produced by the presentations cited above and the ensuing discussions. They do not necessarily represent the views of the individuals themselves nor the institutions to which they are attached.

Recommendations

Women, Young People, Seniors and Foreigners hold the Key to Re-Creating an Open and Energetic Japan

(Provisional Translation : the original in Japanese)

This booklet is also available on the JOICFP homepage as an electronic book. (<http://www.joicfp.or.jp/jp/>)

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