



DawnCenter

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DAWN

NEWSLETTER OF
THE DAWN CENTER
(OSAKA PREFECTURAL
WOMEN'S CENTER)

DAWN

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Women and an Aging Society

Utilizing the Power and Experience of the Elderly in Society



A comedy troupe "Silver Moon" giving a performance

Women's Association for a Better Aging Society/Osaka

Yoshiko Yamada, Deputy Representative

Introduction

According to the "Abridged Life Tables for Japan 2002," released by the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare on July 11, 2003, the average life expectancies of the Japanese are 85.23 years for women and 78.32 for men, reaching a new high. It means that today 54.2% of men and 75.9% of women live to be 80 years old. These figures are significant, because the most serious problems concerning an aging society in Japan today are the increase of older senior citizens (people aged 75 and over) and the existence of elderly women who heavily outnumber their male

counterparts.

Changing Social Structure and Women

The life cycle for both women and men in Japan is changing as they live longer, but this affects women more than men.

In post-war Japan, with the exception of the "baby-boom generation," those who were born immediately after World War II, the number of children per family has drastically decreased and now most married couples have only one or two children. This is partly because people favor the idea of having and raising fewer children in more

comfortable circumstances. In 2002, the birth rate, that is the total number of children a woman bears during her lifetime, declined to 1.32.

The trend toward a declining birthrate is combined with the aging population spreading throughout the world. I would like to pay attention to the relation between an aging society and the "M-shaped labor force rate," one of the most noticeable working patterns for Japanese women. Many Japanese women quit their jobs when they give birth to their first child, dedicate themselves to raising children for a certain period, and go back to work when their children are grown, forming the M-shaped labor force rate which is said to be unique to Japan. Higher education for women, an improved social system, including the enforcement of the Equal Employment Opportunity Law between Men and Women, and the outsourcing of household functions have made it easier for women to go out to work, increasing the number of working women. However, we must not overlook the fact that the M-shaped labor pattern, in which a woman gets a full-time job after she graduates from school, quits her job when she gives birth to her first child and starts working again as a part-time worker when her children are grown up, has firmly taken root.

Women's careers are interrupted because the burdens of housework, child-raising, nursing care, and other unpaid work at home are imposed almost entirely on women, which can be described as a division of labor by gender role. Since women are forced to stop working, they cannot make full use of medical insurance, pension, nursing care insurance and other social security systems which full-time employees are entitled to. Their lives after retirement are not fully supported by pensions. As a result, the economic disparity which women experienced as employed workers also affects them when they become old. Most women have less

economic power than men and grow old as a member of the economically handicapped.

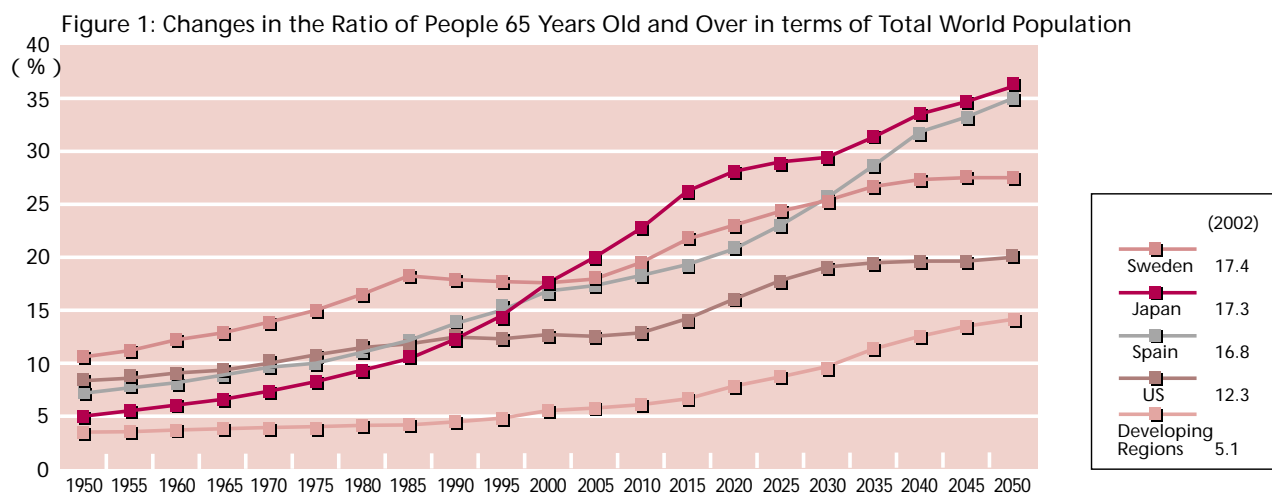
Old Age and a Gender-Equal Society

The movement for the elimination of discrimination against women, which has gained momentum all over the world since the International Women's Year of 1975, has brought about great changes in politics and the social system in Japan. The Basic Law for a Gender-Equal Society, enacted in 1999, was epoch-making in that it stipulated that men and women are equal in their rights and responsibilities in society. Old age visits men and women equally, and for this reason, men and women should be treated equally in their older years.

However, elderly women are often treated unfairly just because they have gone through menopause and are no longer sex objects. The human rights of elderly women, who are also economically handicapped for the reasons mentioned above, should not be infringed upon. Like all other living creatures, human beings are born, mature, and grow old. In a gender-equal society, everyone should be guaranteed freedom and dignity as a human being and enjoy a fruitful life irrespective of his/her age or gender.

Longevity as a Result of a Spiritually Affluent Society

"White Paper on Longevity for 2003," compiled by the Cabinet Office, predicts that in the early part of the 21st century a full-scale aging society, which is unprecedented in history, will visit all the nations of the world. There is no example to follow. We will pioneer a totally new world. The labor force has shrunk to the level where a fundamental revision of the social structure including social security reforms



Sources: UN, World Population Prospects: The 2002 Revision
 However, figures for Japan are cited from the "Population Census of Japan" released by the Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts and Telecommunications, and from the "Population Projections for Japan (compiled in January, 2002)" released by the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research.

Note: Developing Regions refer to the region other than North America, Japan, Europe, Australia and New Zealand.

is needed.

Under these circumstances, the "Second World Assembly on Aging" was convened in Madrid, Spain, in April 2002. One of the participating groups from Japan reported on the "nursing care insurance system," part of the improved social security system in Japan. In response, participants from developing countries mentioned that in their nations improvement to the social security system should be given priority, though introducing a nursing care insurance system for the elderly is nothing but an ideal, even if the disparities of wealth and social structure between Japan and their nations are taken into consideration. Faced with such harsh realities of the disparities among nations and regions of the world. However, it is indeed a great progress that thousands of elderly people from all over the world participated in this world assembly on aging.

A political declaration was issued at the end of the assembly, which highly appreciated longevity as one of the most significant successes human beings have achieved, and stressed that the power and experience of the elderly could be utilized as social resources. With an unprecedented super-aging society close at hand, now is the time to get rid of the mistaken image of the elderly as social burdens.

A New Era Initiated by a New Generation of Senior Citizens

Since the International Women's Year of 1975, women have changed dramatically in their consciousness and have aggressively become involved in various activities. Among others, women who were middle-aged in the 1970s and 1980s have witnessed these changes with deep emotion. They are the generation of women who have brilliant



A brochure of the "Second World Assembly on Aging"

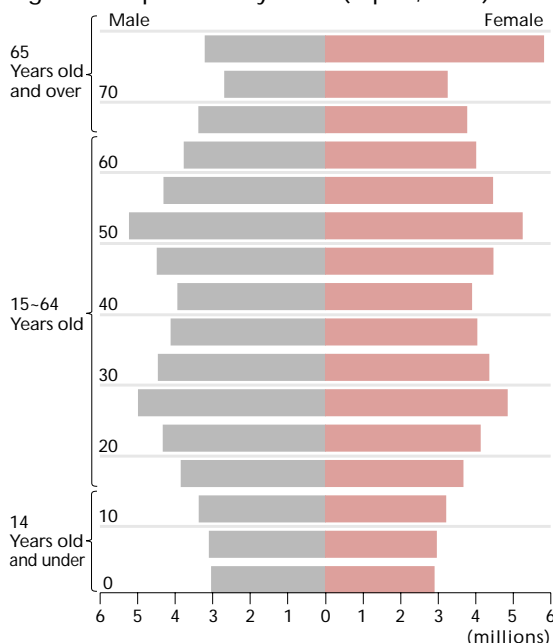
intelligence as well as broad experience but were kept out of paid work under the social structure of the time.

They started to learn with heightened awareness and an ambition to create a new society. They learned about family consciousness and the changing family structure. The knowledge they acquired was enriched by their own experiences. They realized that families cannot bear all the burdens of nursing care for the elderly. They deliberated on how an approaching aging society should be, gathered information, and formed networks. Thus, a new generation of people was born who understand the importance of putting an idea into action through various kinds of volunteer activities. Their steady efforts were the driving force behind the introduction of the nursing care insurance system, translating a slogan into reality. The women, called active full-time housewives in the 1980s, have reached old age and begun to act as pioneers of a new era.

However, it is also true that many elderly women cannot keep up with today's information society. It is a great challenge for the new generation of pioneering seniors to reduce the disparity between social classes and to create a society in which every elderly person has access to information. In every corner of Japan, there are people who share these ambitions and actively engage themselves in volunteer efforts. Whenever I have a chance to communicate with some of these people, I am impressed by their freewheeling exchange of ideas based on flexibility and generosity peculiar to the elderly. I am moved by their enthusiasm and eagerness to make an approaching aging society fulfilling and fruitful.

An 80-year old woman in our group is always careful about her appearance. She says, although she is old, she wants to look nice and fit into the surrounding environment. I am looking forward to celebrating a new era pioneered by this new generation of senior citizens, who are indeed important social resources and are also beautiful, in perfect harmony with the surrounding landscape.

Figure 2: Population Pyramid (Japan, 2000)



The elderly supporting NPOs in Kansai

Dairenji Temple: The Civic Group Pondering on the "Ending*" of Life

Izumi Tanaka, Director of Dairenji

There are many things to decide on at the completion stage of life. What kind of medical and nursing care one wants to receive, whether one demands one's right to die with dignity, how one wants to divide one's inheritance, and what kind of funeral one wants. And how about a grave? In Japan, people have traditionally been buried in their family grave, which has been taken over from generation to generation. However, this tradition is beginning to fade away and "eitaikuyo" graves, with which Buddhist temples take care of graves and hold annual services for the dead instead of families, have been on the increase.

The family structure has been changing greatly, with an increasing number of young people not getting married and an increasing number of married couples not having children. Today, people are more concerned about how to lead a meaningful life as an individual and how to end their life



Priest Akita of Dairenji Temple and personal graves

in their own way. In particular, elderly women, who have long supported the Japanese family institution, are interested in the self-decision made at the completion stage of life.

Considering these situations, a civic group based in a Buddhist temple called Dairenji Temple in Osaka was formed to support people in their completion stage of life. This group is composed of several NPOs which deal with problems concerning the

completion stage of life. People buy personal graves located inside Dairenji Temple while they are alive, and part of the earnings are used to support the activities.

Participating NPOs include an organization which holds workshops to enable patients to actively participate in the medical treatment they are receiving as well as offering telephone medical advice, an organization which offers consultation and workshops on tax, inheritance and money, an organization which promotes hospice care at home and a guardianship system for adults, and an organization which studies and offers support services aimed at introducing funerals held by friends and acquaintances instead of family members. These NPOs link one another on the Internet, offer consultations and take turns holding seminars on their specialized topics.

<http://www.inochi-club.com>

*We regard the completion stage of life as "ending."

Activities of Aiai-net

Masaharu Inoue, Chairman of Aiai-net

It is natural for people to help each other. The NPO "Aiai-net" is a mutual aid group which aims to establish a system under which healthy senior citizens live a fulfilling life after retirement using a skill they have acquired during their career, deposit the time they spend doing volunteer activities and withdraw the deposit (i.e. receive nursing care) when they get older and physically weaker. We are convinced that

establishing such a mutual aid system based in local communities and promoting collaboration among local governments, residents' associations, volunteer groups and NPOs is the key to turn Japan into a spiritually affluent nation.

We are involved in health care, welfare, child-raising, town-building and home help services for the elderly, handicapped and children. We provide services mainly in Miki



Pruning is an important assistance activity.

City, Ono City and surrounding areas in Hyogo Prefecture. (Membership: 20 men and 39 women as of March 2003)

Many of our male members joined our group after retirement and are engaged in the following activities:

1. weeding gardens, pruning back garden trees, cleaning windows, washing screen

doors

2. taking people to and from hospitals, taking people to and from stores and to help them do shopping, taking people to and from banks and administrative agencies

Generally men work outside and women cook, wash, and clean rooms. Facing an aging society, we feel the necessity to hold various kinds of workshops to help men learn how to cook and how to help others do housework.

Starting with thoughts on "death" and placing an emphasis on "how to live now," we will keep on making efforts.

Let us introduce some of the NPOs based in the Kansai area and engaged in unique activities to support the elderly: an NPO which aims to establish a mutual aid system based in local communities with the help of retired male volunteers, an NPO which helps the elderly ponder how to end (i.e. complete) their lives and offers various kinds of assistance to them, and an NPO which established the first old peoples' home for Korean residents in Japan.

Special Elderly Nursing Home "*Kokyou no Ie*"

Social Welfare Corporation "*Kokoro no Kazoku*" (Family of the Heart)

Park Young-tae, Director of Support Projects

We want our residents to be free and unique in their own way. At a special elderly nursing home "*Kokyou no Ie*", we consider one's ethnicity as one's personality. We offer welfare services, respecting one's individuality and personality.

Korean elderly women residing in Japan have long been discriminated against and excluded from the Japanese welfare system. At our home, young Japanese caregivers warmly look after Korean elderly women in need of care. When "*halmeoni*" (a Korean word for an elderly woman) says "I'm happy I'm alive" and smiles brightly, it encourages caregivers, creating a strong bond between them. At a home which reminds them of their homeland, Korean elderly women are

living happily with their Japanese counterparts.

In 1989, Motoi Tauchi (Yun Ki), incumbent director general, shocked by a lonely death of an elderly Korean in 1984, established Japan's first old people's home for Korean residents called "*Kokyou no Ie*" with the help of many Japanese and Koreans. In 2001, at the request of elderly people in the region, a special elderly nursing home called "*Kokyou no Ie, Kobe*" was established which accommodates both Koreans and Japanese. We hope such facilities where Korean and Japanese elderly people live together will be established in other parts of Japan.

"*Kokyou no Ie*" is a place where Japanese conscience, Korean brotherhood and transnational human

love are joined together and bear fruit. We will appreciate your support for establishing more such homes as "*Kokyou no Ie*".



Smiling at volunteer Korean dancers

Providing Hospice Care for the Terminally Ill

Efforts Made in Yodogawa Christian Hospital in Osaka

Hospice originated in Britain. It was introduced into Japan in the 1980s and has developed medical care suited to Japanese medical practices and Japan's social system. As of July 2003, there were 119 hospice and palliative care units in Japan, with five of them in Osaka Prefecture.

Yodogawa Christian Hospital in Osaka City was opened as Japan's second in-hospital hospice unit in 1984. It is intended to help patients with cancer and other incurable diseases spend peaceful days and live their lives fully till the end. A Dawn Center staff member interviewed Keiko Tamura, hospice chief of the hospital's nursing department.

In Japan, family bond is so strong that family members and relatives don't need many words to communicate. They often live apart, but on ceremonial occasions like marriages and funerals, they quickly get together and exert a great influence on one another. When one family member becomes terminally ill, however, hidden problems within the

family suddenly surface. Therefore, we place importance on the communication between a patient and our staff as well as the communication between his/her family and our staff.

We always try to offer medical care that meets each patient's needs. We make every effort to alleviate pain, and when the patient feels a

little better, he/she can leave the hospital and spend a certain period at home if he/she wishes. Furthermore, a support group for bereaved families is available, where families of patients who passed away at our hospital meet doctors and nurses in charge and share pain and sorrow.

In the past, the burden of nursing a sick family member was traditionally imposed on a daughter-in-law or a daughter. Although this tradition still survives, we sometimes see a man who quits his job to take care of his sick wife. Moreover, although the number is small, men who lost their wives at a hospice help one another by holding regular meetings or attending cooking classes together so that they can support themselves.

While respecting the Japanese culture, we will continue to support terminally ill patients and their families.

The Hidden Face of Aging: Japan's Foreign Residents

Tamara Swenson

Aging in Japan has an international face. As the Japanese population as a whole grows older, so have the country's permanent non-Japanese residents. In addition, as the number of marriages between Japanese and non-Japanese continues to increase, more non-Japanese spouses are finding themselves caring for aging relatives. Finally, non-permanent residents on one of the several categories of work-related visas face the concerns of retirement and pension payments. These are the nearly hidden faces of aging in Japan.

Of the faces of aging in Japan, the first is, in many ways, the one that is currently attracting the most concern. The aging of non-Japanese residents is making demands on society. Fortunately, Japanese society is responding.

Not surprisingly, given that the largest group of permanent residents is Korean, most non-Japanese elderly are Korean. More than two million Koreans were brought to Japan before and during the World War II. Those who remained after the war ended are now elderly.

Caring for this elderly population is done primarily within the family, just as it is for most families in Japan. Both cultures share a concern for family that remains strong. However, not everyone has a family to care for them, and some families lack the resources to do so. In response, "Special Facilities for the Elderly" have opened across Japan.

Kokyō no ie (Home-land Homes) is one such facility that works to ease the final years of the aging Korean population. The first *Kokyō no ie* opened in Sakai City, Osaka Prefecture, in 1989.

One of the first things anyone notices when they visit *Kokyō no ie* is that it replicates a Korean environment in Japan. The facilities founder, Yun Ki (also known by his Japanese name of Motoi Tauchi) wanted to give elderly Koreans in Japan a place where they could feel like they were at home. His motivation for this was his mother, a Japanese woman who stayed in Korea after the war and ran an orphanage. Near the end of her life, she reverted to Japanese and wanted the foods of her childhood.

This experience suggested to Yun that aging Koreans in Japan probably yearned for aspects of their childhood, even though they did not return to Korea. After Yun emigrated to Japan, he decided to set up such a place.

Kokyō no ie is like a piece of Korea in the south Osaka area. It has the traditional heated floors of Korea and Korean furniture and decorations in the rooms. It echoes with the sounds of conversations in Korean, and serves traditional Korean fare. It is a true oasis for Korean residents of Japan.

Other long-term permanent residents who have retired and stayed in Japan are usually married to Japanese or have spent most of their adult lives in Japan. This group is primarily people who came to Japan in the 1950s and 1960s and made a commitment to the country.

Asked why they stayed, several retirees married to Japanese said it was their families that kept them here. "It isn't that I don't like going back," said one American man with Japanese spouse, "But my kids and grandkids are here. Where else would I really want to be?"

Similarly, an American woman who decided to stay in Japan after retirement, though she never married, remarked that, "Japan is home. I've been here for more than 50 years. I can't see leaving now just because it is a bit tougher."

And it is tougher. Retirees in Japan, like those in any country, find retirement to be as much of a challenge as working, if not more.

"I retired officially," said one man originally from The Netherlands. "Fortunately, I can keep working part-time. I

don't know what my wife will do when I finally stop working. Chase me out of the house? I just hope I can stay healthy and remain productive."

None of those interviewed expressed any desire to return permanently to their home country.

The second face of aging in Japan for foreigners is the care for aging in-laws, often expected of wives. With the number of "international marriages," that is marriages between Japanese and non-Japanese, on the increase, there are more and more instances where non-Japanese women married to Japanese men find themselves providing some, if not all, of the care to their husband's aging parents. While men married to Japanese women frequently need to accept one or both of their aging in-laws into their homes, they seldom are expected to be the main caregiver.

The Association of Foreign Wives of Japanese (AFWJ) has helped many non-Japanese women cope with the problems of life in Japan, including care for aging in-laws. This group, open to women married or engaged to Japanese men, was begun in 1969. Many of its members find a great deal of support, as well as information about other sources of help, from other members.

AFWJ Kansai District Representative Rebecca Otowa said, "most of it is a matter of individuals helping individuals. We all have our own story to tell. We can talk to each other, listen, and can say 'My God, I went through that, too.' We are a mature organization now, with plenty of *senpai* and *kohai* (seniors and juniors) we can share with."

Other organizations also provide assistance to non-Japanese residents, including the Center for Multicultural Information and Assistance (CMIA), AMDA International Medical Information Center, and the Human Rights Counseling Center for Foreigners. All reported having assisted foreign residents with problems associated with aging, including the problems of medical care, pensions, and insurance.

The non-permanent residents, the third face of aging in Japan, also receive assistance from CMIA, the Human Rights Counseling Center for Foreigners, and United for a Multicultural Japan. The problems of this group are generally centered on medical insurance and retirement insurance.

As non-Japanese now make up more than 1% of the Japanese labor force, the problems associated with pension payments and collecting retirement for foreigners are receiving attention.

In a speech given at a symposium on migration in Tokyo in March, 2003, Vice-Foreign Minister Tetsuro Yano indicated that the number of non-Japanese in the labor force may increase above its current 1% level in the future.

However, current laws prohibit transfer of money paid into Japan's pension funds from being sent to bank accounts in their home country. A lump-sum payment of three-years contributions is provided, but this is the maximum regardless of the number of years spent working in Japan. In addition, foreigners who work in Japan for more than one year are required to pay into the social security system at the same rate as Japanese.

Given the likelihood that Japan will welcome more non-Japanese workers into the labor force, current Japanese policy is sure to be a source of concern to many non-Japanese living here as they become older.

"I don't think I want to live in Japan after I retire," said one woman from Singapore currently working at a Japanese company. "The problem with the pension payments makes me wonder if I even want to stay more than three years, though my company seems to want me to."

One course of action for some non-permanent residents is to become permanent residents. This group is eligible to receive benefits on par with those given to Japanese citizens.

"I became a permanent resident a few years ago," said one woman from Canada. "I did it when I realized it was one way to get something back from my pension payments. However, I really don't want to live here after I retire."

The faces of aging in Japan are diverse. As the Japanese population ages, and Japan welcomes more non-Japanese into the labor force, these faces of aging will continue to evolve.

interview

Japanese women's average life expectancy is seven years longer than that of men. Therefore, a lot of women live alone after their husband's death. The film "Lily Festival" is situated in an apartment house in the suburbs where these widows are living.

The story is:

After one of the residents died suddenly, a man, a professed widower, moved into the apartment house. He is neither dominating nor oppressive, rare among Japanese men. Instead of lumping all the residents together as "old ladies," he deals with each of them as an individual and takes care of them delicately. While socializing with him, the women begin to open the door of sexuality they have concealed.



Sachi Hamano, movie director

Film "Erotica" by women for women

Sachi Hamano, movie director



"Lily Festival"

"Lily Festival" is the first film revealing older women's sexuality strictly and humorously. It has been shown at Gender Equality Centers in various parts of Japan and received great applause. Showings at commercial theaters began in the of summer of 2003. It has been well received abroad, winning the semi-Grand Prix at the Turin International Women's Film Festival in 2002, and has been invited to participate in more than 20 film festivals all over the world.

The director and independent producer of this movie is Ms. Sachi Hamano, who has been filming more than 300 movies as a director of "pink-eiga," or blue movies.

"On reading the original, I was

convinced that it is only I that can picture this, because I have long been describing women's sexuality," Hamano says. She has enjoyed movies since her girlhood, but she had doubts about the stereotyped women's figures as "mothers, wives daughters, and prostitutes." She decided her course was to make movies that presented real women. But at that time, only male graduates were accepted into movie companies. She was a college graduate but not male. Only a pink movie company recruited female staff at the time because of shortage of personnel, so she began her career there.

"In pink movies made by males, only convenient women appear who suit men's sexual illusions. I don't shoot rapes. I don't make children the target of sex. I don't make movies to suit men's desires. Along with these three decisions, I have been filming works in which women experience love-making as their own choice."

The main viewers of pink movies are men. The fact that Ms. Hamano has made more than 300 movies shows their acceptance by a male audience. She analyzes the reason.

"In my movies, soft and delicate women's bodies are shown gorgeously at close-up. In some scenes a woman caresses her beloved man carefully. As I can proceed filming in good



"Lily Festival"

communication with the actresses, they also can act freshly. I'm sure that male audiences would like to see beautiful and lively women's bodies and sex scenes instead of stereo-typed descriptions of 'bound, raped and suffering women soon feeling ecstasy.' My works contains the message that gender-role of 'manliness' or 'Men should please women' should be thrown away."

"Lily Festival" betrays the incidental discovery of women's fight around a man and has a happy ending.

Ms. Hamano's theme is sex and gender. Her next work will be "Yasyaou," a "super-gender" person's stormy life, set in the period of Incessant Civil War. She plans to cast a woman pro-wrestler as the hero (heroine?).

Independent film production requires large sums of money. Hopefully, the world-wide success of "Lily Festival" points to similar triumph in the directors future movies.

(Interviewed by Haneko Inoue)

The Activity of "Women's Association for a Better Aging Society/Osaka"

Masuko Tashiro: Public Information Section,
Women's Association for a Better Aging Society/Osaka

"Women's Association for a Better Aging Society/Osaka" is a civic group (NPO) inaugurated by the people wishing for a rich aging society. It is a sister group of the "Women's Association for a Better Aging Society in Tokyo" whose representative is Ms. Keiko Higuchi.

1. Mission

Women's Association for a Better Aging Society/Osaka is striving for the realization of a better aging society through the activities of offering information and policy recommendations. At the opening ceremony, held on May 15, 1993, many more people gathered than the hall's capacity of 368 people could hold. Every participant, imagining that an aging society would come in the near future, was looking forward to the inauguration of such an organization. The time was accelerating toward an unprecedented aging society.

In the ten years since that initial meeting, the members' enthusiasm has not diminished in the least. On the contrary, from a human rights and gender perspective, Women's Association for a Better Aging Society/Osaka has always been conscious of and investigated problems concerning the aging society. One of the initial activities, "Socialization of nursing care," bore fruit with the introduction of Public Nursing Care Insurance System.

Ms. Emiko Takenaka, the incumbent executive director of the Dawn Center, who was our representative for almost eight years (from 1994 to 2002), laid the foundations of our group, leading it with her wisdom and clear vision, setting high goals for the association.

2. Administration of the association

There are about 250 members (including 10 male members) currently involved in the group. The money needed for the activities is provided through membership fees (4,000 yen), supportive fees, and contributions. The association has actively applied for the funds offered by the state or local governments, and widened the area of activities.

One of the characteristics of the association is the way it is administered. Any member can run for the steering committee (a 2-year term) and join the administration. At present, 32 committee members belong to sections such as general affairs, project



Adult custody law seminar

planning, and public information. They enthusiastically work in line with the annual principles adopted at the annual general assembly. Most members have full-time jobs, so meetings are held on weekday nights or Saturdays. The association's activity base is the Dawn Center.

3. Activities

*Regular meetings: open to nonmembers. (See the list below for last year's activities.)

*Newsletters: issued four times a year. These contain a wide range of articles including timely commentaries, activity reports, interviews, diverse information, and so on. Newsletters are sent to the group members, related institutions and organizations, and mass media. The association is planning to open a homepage on the internet as a new means of public relations, and recently formed a project team to undertake the design of this project.

*Publications: books posing questions from a human rights perspective and survey reports, listed below.

- Create our town's welfare
- Introductory guidebook to nursing care insurance
- Consciousness survey report among members on 'life and death'
- Questionnaire investigation survey report toward the enforcement of the nursing care insurance system

4. Study sessions

Any member can voluntarily set up study sessions when she/he has some theme to investigate. One of the study sessions, "Nursing care labor study group," recently published a survey report (170 pages, A4 size) titled "Users and Home Helpers under the Nursing Care Insurance," with funding from the Osaka Prefectural Government's Jump Program. The association also had an opportunity to provide an opinion report summarizing the issues it has brought to light through investigations and questionnaires to Mr. Chikara Sakaguchi, Minister of Health, Labor and Welfare, for utilization in the ministry's review of the nursing care insurance system.

The review, however, failed to meet the association's proposal to unify nursing care payment. Still, the government amended the three sections and unified them into two: "living support" and "physical care." In this way, the association is fulfilling one of its main goals, to connect our investigation results with policy proposals.

One of the most active areas for the association is the acting troupe "Silver Moon," shown in the cover photo. This troupe, which began as one of the study sessions, has a seven-year history. The troupe members (all members of the association) pose questions to the audience by performing comically about issues of concern in an aged society such as nursing care and struggles between couples or families based upon the consciousness differences. After the show, they talk with the audience while still in costume. Compliments such as "The performance is beyond *Yoshimoto*,"* and "really funny," or "It has woken me up," encourage the performers time after time. The troupe members do everything, including writing scripts, making props, performing, and stage setup. It is often the case that they are requested to perform on demand. The troupe has performed more than 30 times.



Handing in the opinion report reviewing the nursing care insurance system to Mr. Chikara Sakaguchi, Minister of Health, Labor, and Welfare

One member after another in the association has become lawmakers in local governments, taking the step to put investigation activities into practice. (Currently, one is a local head and 15 are lawmakers.) Additionally, some members take part in the preparations for measures aimed at aiding women and elderly citizens in local governments.

It was unimaginable for women decades ago to undertake studies of issues directly related to various social concerns with others. Today, through the association, members act vividly, finding joy in working with people who share common interests and aspirations, studying persistently, and empowering themselves. They pose a new image of elders quite different from the past.

We are living in a rapidly aging society with no model. We have to create this by ourselves. The Women's Association for Better Aging Society/Osaka intends to serve as the forerunners in enacting this model by steadily continuing our activities. We hope that future generations will look at our activities and say, "I would like to be an active elder, too."

(*A well-known commercial comic group in Osaka)

Examples of regular meetings (2002-2003)

date	type	title	lecturer	site	
Dec.7	Lecture	"Advent of New Silver"	Chizuko Ueno (professor at Tokyo University Graduate School)	Dawn Center	○
Dec.14	Lecture	"Nursing Care Insurance and Caring Labor"	Mami Nakano (lawyer)	Dawn Center	■
Jan.11 and other days	Performance (3 times)	"At the Ferry of River Styx" & Discussion	The troupe "Silver Moon"	Dawn Center & elsewhere	○
Feb.15	Lecture	"Economics in Late-life"	Mariko Adachi (professor at Osaka Women's University)	Dawn Center	○

○ projects entrusted by the Education and Science Ministry (co-hosted by Men's Center)
■ supported by Osaka Prefectural Government

Japan's Aged Society from a Gender Viewpoint

Reading the "White Paper on Aged Society"

Makiko Komatsu Chairperson of the Gender and System Institute
Part-time lecturer, Mukogawa Women's College

The "White Paper on an Aged Society, 2003," issued by the cabinet office, contains a number of sections of interest to those working for gender equality.

Japan's ratio of the elderly to the total population reached 18.5% in October 2002. For women, the ratio has already reached 20.4%. Women's average life expectancy of 84.93 years is seven years longer than men's (78.07). Both are the longest in the world.

Every study of the elderly indicates that they are anxious about health, money, and loneliness. These three concerns are closely connected and are indications of the quality of life for the elderly. Furthermore, a gender gap exists for all three.

It is often said that the aging problem is a woman's problem. The first reason for this is that the rate of women in the total population increases according to age. Women account for 57.6% of those aged 65 and older in Japan, and 63.8% of those aged 75 and older. Clearly, this indicates a gender difference regarding marital life for those aged 65 and older (83.1% of men are married, while only 45.5% of women are). Second, most women have small pensions and difficulty in maintaining financial independence because they worked for fewer years or were paid less than men because they spent time on child-rearing and maintaining the home. Third, women overwhelmingly shoulder more

responsibility in caring for aged parents.

The Gender and System Institute is concerned with how these problems are dealt with and supported by governmental policies. Therefore, the "White Paper on an Aged Society, 2003" was closely examined for this information.

The White Paper consists to two major sections: Chapter 1, Present Status of Aging; Chapter 2, Present State of Administration of Provisions for the Aged Society. Following these chapters, a description of "The Plans and Measures for the Aged Society in 2003" is given.

Let's examine the current state of these problems.

Health Problems

The first of the three gender gap issues is seen in health issues, which are the most common area for anxiety among the elderly.

According to the Basic Survey on National Lifestyle 2001, 24.9% of elderly women and 21.6% of elderly men have difficulty in everyday life. While both groups have difficulty, women suffer falling accidents twice as often as men.

In April 2000, the Public Nursing Care Insurance System began. Year by year, more people have been certified as in need of nursing care. A main reason for nursing care is cerebral hemorrhages, which afflict 49.9% of men but only 20.2% of women.

One concern is who is the main

caretaker when the elderly suffer ill health. As Figure 1 shows, family members living in the same dwelling provide 71.1% of care and family members living separately provide 7.5%. Among family members living in the same dwelling, male caregivers provide care 16.8% of the time (husbands 8.2%, sons 7.6%, son-in-laws 0.5%), while female caregivers provide 54.3% of this care (daughter-in-laws 22.1%, wives 17.6%, daughters 12.3%). This indicates a main feature of elderly care in Japan; daughter-in-laws provide the largest proportion of care. As of 2001, nursing services provided only 9.3% of care.

Economic Activity and Income

The gender gap in income is remarkable. The average personal income for men is 3.036 million yen, but for women is only 1.124 million yen. Among the elderly, 16.5% of women have no income, while only 4.4% men have none. Among women more than 75 years old, 19.1% have no income.

The Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare has enacted policies for employment for those between 55 and 65 years old. Those more than 70 years old are not considered in government statistics. No consideration is given to the fact that gender differences in employment increase according to age. (See Figure 2: Employment Status, Ages 55 and Over.)

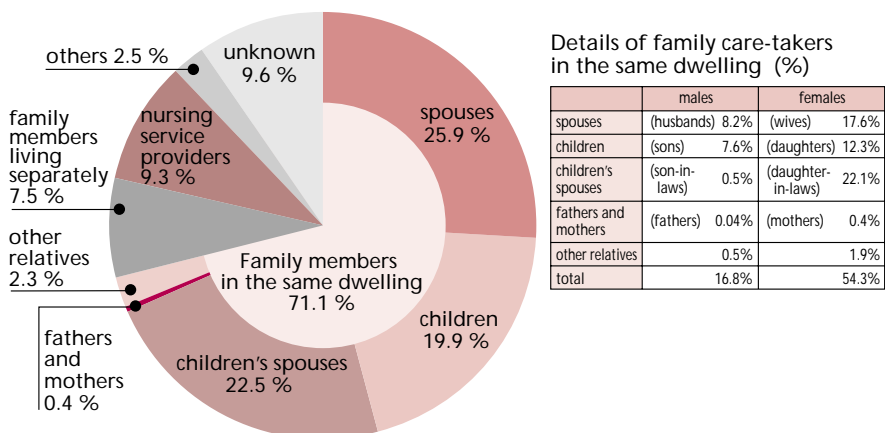
Sex roll divisions also exist in other areas. As to housework among elderly people, women shoulder 62.9% of unpaid housework, while men provide only 13.3%. Similarly, 8.6% of elderly women are the main breadwinners, while men are 43.8%.

Loneliness and Social Activities

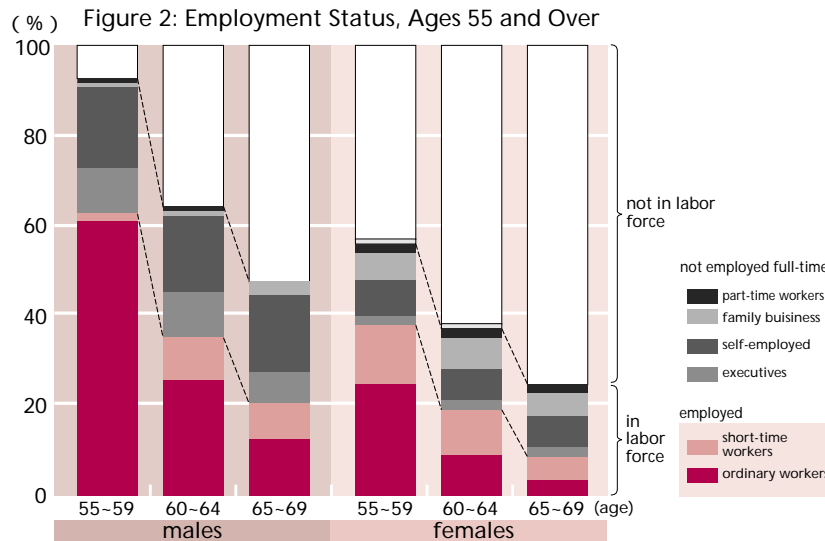
As of 2000, 2.29 million elderly women and 740,000 men were living alone.

One out of five women has no relationship with people in her neighborhood, while one out of three men has no such relationship. Similarly, 20.9% of women and 29% of men have no close friends. On the other hand, more men than women participate in group activities (56.6% of men and 48.9% of women) and community organizations (62.7% versus 48.0%). These figures show the tendency

Figure 1: Relation of Main Caretakers to Those Who Need Care (%)



Source: Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare "Basic Survey on National Lifestyle" (2001)



Source: Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, "Old-age Employment Status Survey"

of men to be more active in groups and organizations.

Provisions for an Aged Society

One of the features of this year's White Paper is the report of the Second World Conference about Aging in Madrid in 2002. From this information, we are able to compare Japan's policies with international policies adopted after the Vienna Conference in 1982. Another feature is the presentation of provisions for an aging society along side provisions for dealing with the declining birthrate.

The political declaration in the

"International Action Plan 2002" adopted at the Madrid Conference says, "Gender Equality should be the mainstream in every policy." In Japan, not every policy fulfills the spirit of this declaration.

One of the areas currently under review and reform because of Japan's financial difficulties is the public pension system. This consists of two parts, a proportional pension based on pre-retirement salary and a basic pension given everyone. (See Figure 3: Japan's Pension System).

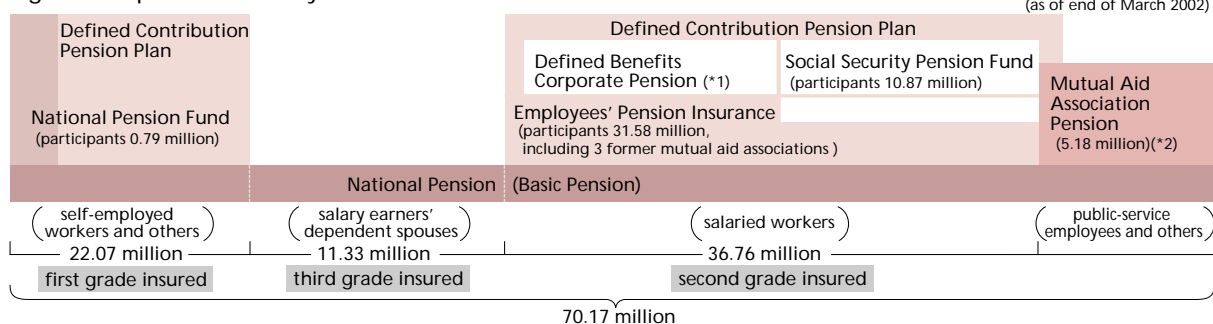
At the end of 2002, the Pension Bureau of the Social Security Council, an advisory panel to the Health, Labor and

Welfare Ministry, presented the direction for dealing with "the declining birthrate, women's participation in the workforce, and changes in working patterns." Two points are notable.

The first point is the review of benefits and contributions to pensions. The Welfare Ministry plans to change to a fixed premium system and adjust the level of pension benefits accordingly instead of raising payments to maintain the level of benefits at 59% of pre-retirement take-home income as provided under the current pension program.

The second point in the Welfare Ministry's plan is discussion of women's pensions. Above all, two items are likely to be influential. Item one aims at "building a neutral pension system to allow choice of diverse lifestyles," and recommends that employees' pension insurance should be expanded to insure part-time and temporary workers so that they pay premiums in proportion to their income and receive pension benefits. The second one is addressed at the "third grade insured." This group consists primarily of full-time housewives, usually the unemployed spouses of salaried workers. They receive a basic pension without paying premiums and their formerly employed spouse (primarily men) receives an extra pension benefit. However, in the case of divorce, the unemployed spouse (primarily women) receives only the basic pension. After 2004, part of the employee's pension will be divided between husband and wife following a divorce.

Figure 3: Japan's Pension System



Note: (*1) Defined Benefits Corporate Pension was enforced in April 2002. Approved Retirement Pension (participants 9.17 million) will be switched into other pensions within 10 years.
(*2) The Mutual Aid Association of Agricultural, Forest and Fisheries cooperatives was integrated with the Employees' Pension after April, 2002.

first grade insured	second grade insured	third grade insured
<input type="radio"/> self-employed workers and others between 20 and 59 years of age <input type="radio"/> fixed premium 13,300 yen a month	<input type="radio"/> salaried workers and public-service employees and others <input type="radio"/> premiums in proportion to income rate of Employees' Pension premiums: 13.58 % (*rate of pension premiums based on total income after April, 2003) (*applied to Basic Pension and Employees' Pension Insurance of second and third grade insured (remuneration proportional)) <input type="radio"/> half of the premiums covered by employers	<input type="radio"/> dependent spouses of salary earners <input type="radio"/> the insured need not contribute <input type="radio"/> paid by insurers of the pension which spouses participate <input type="radio"/> half of the premiums in covered by employers
<input type="radio"/> National treasury burdens one-third of the total amount of basic pension benefits		

Benefits of Old-age Pension (April 2003)
 *a self-employed worker (first grade, participation period 40 years) 66,417 yen a month
 *a salaried worker's couple (total of Social Security Pension of average wage for 40 years for second grade insured, and Basic Pension for 40 years for two) 235,992 yen a month
 Number of beneficiaries of public pensions (as of end of March 2002) 29.51 million
 Sum of pension benefits of public pension beneficiaries (fiscal 2001) 40.784 trillion yen

Source: Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare

Active now!

Get together, Challenging women entrepreneurs

The Dawn Center offers pioneering enlightenment programs aimed at the realization of a gender-equal society. One of the biggest events in 2003 was the "Women's Challenge Fair," held on October 25 and 26. The Dawn Center devoted considerable energy toward this event.

Compared with other nations, Japan is said to be one where women play less active roles in society. Women account for only 8.9% of those in management posts in Japanese enterprises. The gender empowerment index in the UNDP report on human development, which shows the degrees of women's participation in society, ranks Japan at 44 among 66 nations. Under such circumstances, the "Women's Challenge Fair" played a supporting role in the realization of a gender-equal society, one where ambitious women are able to exert their individuality and ability.

The main theme was "Active now! Get together, challenging women entrepreneurs!"

The fair consisted of various programs for women who are challenging their abilities in a number of fields and struggling for independence and self-realization.

It included lectures, symposiums, and seminars with titles such as "How to Advance Your Career in Enterprises," "Balancing Childcare and Career," "The Way to Entrepreneurship," and "Working at NPO/NGOs." The fair also gave case presentations of successful women entrepreneurs and presented a forum of Japan's four women governors.

Drama producer Ms. Yukiko Kobayashi, who was the first woman to take the post of director of program production at NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation), opened the fair by calling on Japan's working women to "Lithely accumulate your career in organizations."

In the afternoon of the first day, Japan's four incumbent women governors highlighted the afternoon program on the first day, October 25. The four governors, during a forum at the Dawn Center, talked about the supporting policies for gender-equality from an administrative viewpoint.

On the second day, several colorful programs took place,



Onna-Akindo (women entrepreneurs) presented flowers to four women governors.

including seminars supporting working mothers and women continuing their work and lectures for women hoping to work in the field of NPO/NGOs, an area that is drawing growing interest in Japan.

The featured program on the second day of the fair was "Onna-Akindo Aki-matsuri" (Autumn fair for women entrepreneurs). Successful case-study displays by women entrepreneurs, opportunities for consultation, introduction of NPO activities, and administrative information corners, clearly displayed the venture business energy for which Naniwa (the historic name for Osaka) is famous. The bustling and joyful fair was a great success, encouraging the women who took part.

Osaka Gender Equality Foundation

In order to develop various projects for achieving a gender-equal society in which women and men can cooperate in every field to create a more

humane life, this foundation was established in 1994 by the Osaka Prefectural Government, and it administers and operates the Dawn Center.



DownCenter

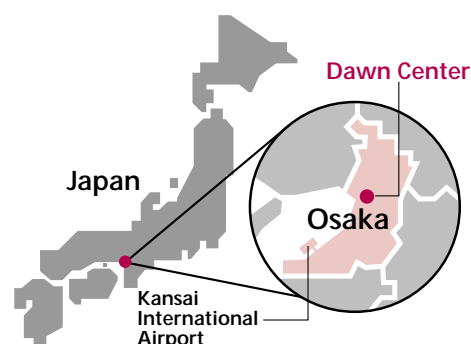
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