

The 8th ASEAN & Japan High Level Officials Meeting of Caring Societies
“Poverty Alleviation with a Focus on Vulnerable People”
*Through strengthening collaboration between the social welfare
and health services*
30 August – 2 September 2010, Tokyo

Overall Summary

The Eighth ASEAN and Japan High Level Officials Meeting on Caring Societies under the theme of “poverty alleviation with a focus on vulnerable people” was held from 30 August to 2 September 2010, in Tokyo, Japan, hosted by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, the Government of Japan (MHLW).

With the aim of enhancing close collaboration between ASEAN and Japan in the health and social welfare fields, participants shared views and had a valuable exchange of ideas, experiences, lessons learnt and good practices, especially for poverty alleviation and the creation of social safety nets to assist the most vulnerable.

The proceedings and outcomes of this meeting are shown in the ANNEX as agreements and recommendations.

Day 1: Monday, 30 August 2010

Plenary Session

Mr. Hiroyuki Nagahama, Senior Vice-Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare, MHLW welcomed the participants to the 8th ASEAN & Japan High Level Officials Meeting on Caring Societies. He stated that the meeting was intended to be an opportunity for participants to discuss how to protect and encourage the poor, and how to support the growing middle class of Asia and ensure that advances against poverty were sustained. He requested that the meeting think about how to reduce economic disparities in each country, and suggested that given the multidimensional nature of poverty, interdisciplinary cooperation was highly needed.

Mr. Daisuke Koga, Deputy Director, Office of International Cooperation, International Affairs Division, Minister's Secretariat, MHLW, informed the participants that MHLW expected the meeting to explore a supplemental poverty index, share and exchange views and good practices on policies for poverty alleviation, and seek out possibilities for future coordination in the field of employment policy.

Dr. Aya K Abe, Department of Empirical Social Security Research, National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, gave a keynote speech entitled, “Understanding Poverty: Concepts and Its Consequences.” She introduced the idea that poverty could be described as the inability to participate in society and suggested that the creation of truly equitable societies required the solving of relative poverty, not just poverty in absolute terms.

Mr. Yasuhiro Fujii, Deputy Assistant Minister for International Policy Planning, Minister’s Secretariat, MHLW, gave a speech entitled, “Policy frame for poverty alleviation: Recent Japanese Government Experiences.” His presentation explained the anti-poverty policies of the Japanese Government since World War II as well as contemporary measures undertaken.

Prof. Hideharu Uemura, Department of Social Work, Japan College of Social Work, gave a presentation entitled, “Community-based participatory approaches for poverty alleviation: Good Practice in Japan and Cambodia.” He explained two examples of good practices for developing social safety nets in local communities in Japan and Cambodia.

During the country presentation session, each country reviewed progress since the last meeting, discussed the current challenges faced, and shared good practices regarding social safety nets.

Day 2: Tuesday, 31 August 2010

Site visit in Kisarazu City, Chiba Prefecture.

Day 3: Wednesday, 1 September 2010

Plenary Session

Ms. Mega Irena, Senior Officer for Social Welfare, Women, Labour & Migrant Workers Division, the ASEAN Secretariat, and Ms. Jintana Sriwongsa, Senior Officer, the ASEAN Secretariat, presented on “ASEAN’s Efforts in Health and Social Welfare Sectors to Address Poverty-related Issues in the Region.” Ms. Irena explained the challenges faced by the ASEAN region in the social welfare field as well as plans the Secretariat was formulating to alleviate poverty. Ms. Sriwongsa explained the challenges the ASEAN region faced in terms of health care.

Ms. Anjana Bhushan, Division for Health Sector Development, WHO/WPRO, gave a presentation on “Addressing poverty in health: a framework for analysis and action.” She emphasized throughout her presentation the multi-dimensional nature of poverty and the need to gather good data on many different social indicators including income, sex, ethnicity, rural/urban residence, employment status and other factors in order to truly understand the state of poverty in a country. She suggested two approaches: putting health on the poverty agenda and putting poverty on the health agenda. For the latter, countries need to understand and address barriers to access to health services that excluded populations face, such as geographical barriers, financial barriers, sociocultural barriers and health system-related barriers.

Mr. Shintaro Nakamura, Senior Adviser, Human Development Department, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), presented on “JICA’s Efforts for Poverty Alleviation - Focusing on the collaboration between health and welfare sectors.” In addition to an introduction of a few JICA projects, he explained that poverty alleviation was a core issue for JICA and that the organization was highly interested in working with partners willing to take the initiative.

Mr. Shinichi Hasegawa, Director, International Labour Organization (ILO) Office in Japan, presented on “Poverty Alleviation and Decent Work.” He stressed the viewpoint of the ILO that poverty alleviation could be achieved through job creation, and emphasized the need for each agency involved in poverty alleviation to work toward the same direction.

Group Discussion

The following themes were discussed during the group discussion session. Participants were split into four groups to discuss two issues.

Group 1: “Challenges and Prospects on Poverty Reduction Measures by way of collaboration between Health and Welfare Sector at National Level (High Level)”

Chair: Mr. Myint Thein (Myanmar)

Rapporteurs: Dr. Virgie Rivero Condez (Philippines), Dr Hajih Lailawati Haji
Jumat (Brunei Darussalam)

Facilitator: Dr. Aya Abe K, Department of Empirical Social Security Research,
National Institute of Population and Social Security Research

Group 2: “How should the Central and Local Governments be collaborated in light of Poverty Reduction Programs under the cooperation between Health and Welfare Sector? (High Level)”

Chair: Dr. Valeriano Jesus Valmonte Lopez Jr. (Philippines)

Rapporteur: Ms. Wimolrat Ratchukool (Thailand)

Facilitator: Prof. Hideharu Uemura, Department of Social Work, Japan
College of Social Work

Group 3: “Challenges and Prospects on Poverty Reduction Measures by way of collaboration between Health and Welfare Sector at National Level”

Chair: Ms. Evelyn M. Lontok (Philippines)

Rapporteur: Mr. Roeun Rithy Roath (Cambodia)

Facilitator: Mr. Shintaro Nakamura, Senior Adviser, Human Development
Department, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)

Group 4: “How should the Central and Local Governments be collaborated in light of Poverty Reduction Programs under the cooperation between Health and Welfare Sector?”

Chair: Ms. Duc Thi Minh Ha (Vietnam)

Rapporteur: Ms. Heng San San (Singapore)

Facilitator: Ms. Chiyoko Numata, The Secretary General, The Japan League
on Developmental Disabilities

Day 4: Thursday, 2 September 2010

Plenary Session

Dr. Virgie Rivero Condez reported for group one, explaining to the meeting that the group had come up with 14 recommendations in the areas of policy and planning, coordination mechanisms and ASEAN initiatives on poverty alleviation/reduction. The group’s policy and planning recommendations were: 1) Increase universal coverage of social protection; 2) Enhance community responsiveness and participation; 3) Apply a

health security approach; 4) Prioritize to consider in one policy strategy: synergies in the planning process; 5) Establish or strengthen national mechanisms on poverty such as national councils; 6) Identify key priorities and performance indicators; 7) Develop or strengthen mechanisms for identifying hardcore poor; 8) Develop a clear framework on poverty reduction/alleviation; 9) Clarification on social protection concept; and 10) Initiate discussion on minimum standards of living among ASEAN member states. The group's coordination mechanisms recommendation was: 11) Establish or strengthen interagency national coordination and cooperation. The group's ASEAN initiatives on poverty alleviation/reduction recommendations were: 12) Initiate further discussion in the MGD Forum; 13) Establish or strengthen result-focused monitoring and evaluation systems; and 14) Strengthen continued information sharing.

Director Delilah S. Fuertes presented for group two, explaining that the group had discussed the four topics of the budget for poverty reduction, common challenges, national challenges and recommendations. The main recommendations of the second group were: 1) Greater budget allocations for poverty reduction programs; 2) Seek out reliable and regularly updated data on poverty at the national level; 3) Convene capacity building training for relevant officials; 4) Strengthen inter-ministerial collaboration at the national level; and 5) Strengthen community-based poverty reduction programs.

Dr. Valeriano Jesus Valmonte Lopez Jr. reported for group three, stating that the group had identified eight key challenges faced by ASEAN member states and developed recommendations in response to those challenges. The group's recommendations were: 1) Strengthen collaboration among ministries; 2) Promote decentralization policy and monitoring; 3) Empower local governments to translate policy into implementation; and 4) Encourage assistance from external organizations.

Ms. Geraldine Kuah presented for group four. She commented that the group had organized their recommendations according to those that could be implemented at the central and local levels. Recommendations at the central-government level were: 1) Encourage the collection of data to facilitate policy planning; 2) Encourage a holistic approach to policy planning and service evaluation; 3) Leverage on the support and commitment of senior office bearers. Recommendations at the local-government level were: 1) Strength grassroots involvement through the formation of

community-based organizations and support networks; 2) Encourage the development of capacity and competencies of local-level agencies in both the health and social welfare sectors.

General Overview of the 8th Meeting

The following are the final remarks from each country and each participant.

Brunei: Brunei is a small country, and because of this, we have realized that every person matters. One thing that we would like to tell our leaders at home is that poverty is a multi-dimensional issue. We need to know why we still have people slipping through our social safety nets. We believe it is important to put poverty on the health agenda and health on the poverty agenda. We also believe in the mainstreaming of many of these issues. Whole country approaches are needed.

Thailand: I am pleased to see everyone here working on this. I think I speak for everyone when I say that nothing could make us happy like the happiness of our people. I learned a lot from each country.

Cambodia: I believe this meeting has been valuable for us to develop future plans and find a way forward. Poverty is everywhere in the world, causing a great burden on all people. I think this meeting has made it evident that all countries and development partners are dedicated to improving the lives of the vulnerable.

Indonesia: Poverty is very complicated. By sharing our experiences through these meetings, we can find ways to deal with it. Although this meeting is ending, this is just the beginning of our quest to fight poverty. I think that we have all learned a lot from this meeting. I hope that going forward we will all be more sensitive to the vulnerable.

Laos: 83% of the people in my country are farmers. It is my dream to do something about the state of poverty in Laos. I hope that after returning home I can promote cooperation between social welfare and health ministries. I felt that this meeting was a wonderful opportunity to learn many things from many experienced people. I hope that these meetings will continue in the future and that we will continue to share information.

Malaysia: These meetings are a wonderful opportunity to strengthen collaborations. As mentioned by the previous speakers, I believe that this is not the end of our quest, but the beginning.

Myanmar: This meeting provided us with many recommendations on how to extend social services to vulnerable people. I am sure that we will see good things happen as a result of this meeting.

Philippines: The sharing of experiences and best practices from each country has been very useful. The Philippines hopes that the recommendations we received in this meeting will help us to improve the situation for our region's most vulnerable.

Singapore: This meeting has been a wonderful platform for information sharing. We deeply appreciate the efforts of Japan and all the participants here.

Vietnam: For the next ASEAN Summit, we have proposed the adoption of an ASEAN Leader's statement on human resources and sustainable growth. I hope that next year Japan will hold a meeting on this issue.

China: I have learned a lot from the presentations and lectures and very active deliberations. China, Japan and Korea are all interested in collaborating very closely with ASEAN countries. It is not always easy for all of our 13 countries to get together. I hope that we can have further collaboration in the future. China is developing very quickly, but our development is uneven. According to World Bank statistics, there are 60 million impoverished people in China, a number greater than the populations of

many ASEAN nations. We have a national poverty alleviation agency under the control of our state council. I believe that we also need internal coordination on this issue. Thank you for the excellent opportunity to attend this meeting.

ASEAN Secretariat: In the past four days I have been convinced of this platform's importance. I think the question for us is how to work together in the future. I hope that the ASEAN Secretariat can be even more involved in these meetings going forward.

Mr. Nakamura: It was wonderful to see the strong emphasis everyone placed on community-based approaches. That said, not all problems can be dealt with by communities alone. I strongly urge you, officials from national governments, to listen to the people and assist facilitators in the local community. JICA is always with you. Please do not ever hesitate to contact us when you need some assistance.

Dr. Abe: It has been pleasing seeing the progress being made in each country. I want to mention how glad I was to see so many women here today. Working in Japanese bureaucracy and academia, I am used to working only with men, so I am very pleased that so many powerful women attended this meeting.

Dr. Uemura: I was also pleased to see the participation of so many women. Asia is aging, and I think that care of the elderly will be an increasing problem in the future. I hope that we can continue to cooperate to improve the state of social welfare in Asian countries.

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

The recommendations of each group were summarized into a single set of recommendations. The agreements and recommendations are shown in the ANNEX.

Closing Remarks

Mr. Taro Muraki, Assistant Minister for International Affairs, Minister's Secretariat, MHLW, thanked all the participants for attending, especially the representatives of South Korea and China. He emphasized that helping people to become self-sufficient and escape poverty was a common challenge for all governments, and proclaimed that he believed the meeting had offered a good opportunity for each participating country to collaborate more closely. He also expressed his hope that countries would work together to make the meeting's recommendations a reality. Thereafter, the meeting was adjourned. ■

ANNEX

The 8th ASEAN & Japan High Level Officials Meeting on Caring Societies
*“Poverty alleviation with a focus on vulnerable people through strengthening
collaboration between the social welfare and health services”*

30 August - 2 September 2010, Tokyo, Japan

PREAMBLE

The participants of the 8th ASEAN-Japan High-level Officials Meeting on Caring Societies held on 30 August – 2 September 2010 in Tokyo, Japan, agreed on the following:

1. Acknowledge with appreciation the initiative of the Government of Japan to convene the ASEAN-Japan High-level Officials Meeting on Caring Societies since 2003. We consider this 8th Meeting as an effective platform of information sharing and exchange of views on health and social welfare aspects of poverty alleviation.
2. Further acknowledge that poverty is multidimensional and, therefore, there is a need for closer collaboration and coordination among relevant Ministries in alleviating poverty, including in income generating programmes for the poor, provision of basic health services, infrastructures, clean water, housing, food safety as well as in providing wider access for the poor to employment and promotion of basic education and vocational training.
3. Recognize the need for follow-up actions of recommendations of the Meetings at the regional and national levels;
4. The proceedings and outcomes of this 8th Meeting should be reported to the respective Ministers and other senior officials in each country;
5. Japan with the support of ASEAN secretariat should report the proceedings and outcomes of this meeting to the ASEAN+3 Ministers and Senior Officials Meetings on Health and Development (AHMM+3/SOMHD+3) and on Social Welfare and Development (AMMSWD+3/SOMSWD+3);
6. Strengthen the existing collaboration of SOMHD+3 and SOMSWD+3 concerning poverty reduction;
7. The participants also reaffirmed the theme of the 9th Meeting in 2011 shall focus on human resource development in welfare and health.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Regional Level :

1. To promote regional information sharing and dissemination of good practices in poverty reduction;
2. To encourage discussion on social protection concepts and components including development of a framework on poverty reduction in line with the MDGs platform;
3. To enhance capacity building on monitoring and evaluation on poverty reduction for relevant officials to meet local needs;

National Level:

1. To encourage an appropriate budget for poverty reduction programs with a focus on vulnerable groups;
2. To encourage a holistic approach to policy planning and review/evaluation, involving senior-level officials from respective Ministries and local governments;
3. To promote suitable coverage of social protection schemes, particularly for vulnerable groups;
4. To strengthen community-based poverty reduction programmes and capacity building for officials, service providers, health and social workers at different levels;
5. To strengthen the systematic collection of data to facilitate policy and service planning, programme implementation as well as monitoring and evaluation;
6. To advocate health issues in poverty agenda and poverty issues in health agenda.