

The 16th ASEAN and Japan High Level Officials Meeting on Caring Societies

**-Promoting Inclusive Society through
Empowering Children and Youth and Alleviating
Poverty-**

Overall Summary

Date: 5 - 7 December 2018

Venue: Shin Yokohama Prince Hotel, Yokohama, Japan

The 16th ASEAN and Japan High Level Officials Meeting on Caring Societies under the theme of “Promoting Inclusive Society through Empowering Children and Youth and Alleviating Poverty” was held from 5 December to 7 December 2018, in Yokohama, Japan, hosted by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, the Government of Japan (MHLW).

The meeting focused on collaboration between health care and social welfare services for the wellbeing of mothers and children.

At the meeting, we shared Japan’s past and recent experiences and their policy implications, and expected participants to actively contribute to policy discussions based on their own expertise and experiences.

Group photo of
the 16th ASEAN and Japan High Level Officials Meeting on Caring Societies



1. Background of the meeting

The ASEAN and Japan High Level Officials Meeting on Caring Societies has been organized by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) of Japan since 2003. The purpose of the meeting is to enhance human resource development in health and social welfare areas, and to strengthen the Japan-ASEAN cooperative relationship.

This Meeting has been recognized as a vital platform to support the ASEAN Plus Three (Japan, the People's Republic of China, and the Republic of Korea) Health Ministers' Meetings as well as the ASEAN Plus Three Ministerial Meetings on Social Welfare and Development. Japan reports the outcome of the Meeting to the ASEAN Plus Three Ministers' Meetings.

Since 2011, MHLW has invited officials in charge of employment policies in addition to health and social welfare experts, with a view to promoting cooperation in these three related fields.

2. Date and Venue

5 - 7 December 2018, Shin Yokohama Prince Hotel, Yokohama, Japan

3. Organizer

Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW), the Government of Japan
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4. Collaborators

The ASEAN Secretariat
World Health Organization Regional Office for the Western Pacific (WPRO)
International Labour Organization (ILO) Office for Japan
Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)
Kanagawa Prefecture
Yokohama City

5. Participants

(1) ASEAN countries: health sector, welfare sector, labour sector:
Kingdom of Cambodia, Republic of Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic,

Malaysia, Republic of the Union of Myanmar, Republic of the Philippines, Republic of Singapore, Kingdom of Thailand, Socialist Republic of Vietnam

(2) Observer countries: People's Republic of China

(3) Collaborators:

- The ASEAN Secretariat
- World Health Organization Regional Office for the Western Pacific (WPRO)
- International Labour Organization (ILO) Office for Japan
- Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)
- Kanagawa Prefecture
- Yokohama City

(4) Keynote speaker and expert: Dr. Aya Abe, Professor, Tokyo Metropolitan University

(5) General audiences: Open to media and general audience

Day 1: Wednesday, 5 December 2018

Opening Remarks

Dr. Yasuyuki Sahara, Councillor, Minister's Secretariat, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare opened the meeting by welcoming and thanking the various participants for their support. He continued to introduce and explain the background of the 16th ASEAN and Japan High Level Officials Meeting on Caring Societies. The meeting was borne from the "Initiative for a Caring World" which was proposed by Japan at the G7 Summit in 1996. The initiative is based on sharing knowledge and experience in order to create better societies and pass them on to future generations.

The ASEAN and Japan High Level Officials Meeting on Caring Societies has been engaged in activities focused on collaboration between welfare, health, and labor services. The theme of this year's meeting is "Promoting Inclusive Society through Empowering Children and Youth and Alleviating Poverty."



The ASEAN region is experiencing rapidly ageing societies, so realizing a society where children and youths can grow and succeed is an important issue. Dr. Sahara noted the current situation in Japan regarding child and youth poverty, including initiatives being implemented. There is a chain of poverty phenomenon in Japan where children whose parents received welfare also become beneficiaries of welfare when they become adults. Preventing this chain of poverty is an issue which must be tackled.

Dr. Sahara explained that in order to realize a society where all children can have opportunities and succeed, it is vital not only to support children who are in poverty but also empower children and youths. In Japan, efforts are ongoing to strengthen consideration and measures towards families and children who have difficulties in child rearing and childcare.

Dr. Sahara concluded his talk by expressing his hopes that this meeting will provide

opportunities to further improve relationships through mutual sharing of knowledge and experiences.



Ms. Yuri Arakida, Deputy Mayor of Yokohama City spoke next. She started by mentioning that, at a glance, it appears that Japan has no poverty. However, poverty exists invisibly in Japan. Comparatively, there is a high level of children living below the poverty level. Ms. Arakida described the poverty situation in Yokohama by

highlighting that children have suffered from not being able to buy food and school supplies, which has resulted in isolating children from society. Yokohama has made efforts to combat child poverty in the form of education-related initiatives which provide school materials, lunch money, sports programs, and teachers dedicated to supporting children with learning disabilities or physical disabilities.

In addition, Ms. Arakida explained that in order to encourage students with disabilities to learn, counselors have been employed to provide support for them. In high school, there are volunteer programs for university students to mentor high school students with disabilities. Moreover, there are life skill programs which teach youths how to properly manage daily tasks. To conclude her presentation, Ms. Arakida highlighted Yokohama's youth support programs, such as specialized counseling and employment training, the attractive points of Yokohama, and wishing a successful meeting this year.

Mr. H.E. Kung Phoak, Deputy Secretary-General, ASEAN Socio-Culture Community (ASCC), ASEAN Secretariat explained that the ASEAN and Japan High Level Officials Meetings have provided a useful platform to exchange ideas and experiences. He noted the urgency and importance of improving the quality of living for children in poverty.



In Asia, there is a large amount of children in poverty, and the unemployment rate is increasing. In addition, the unemployment rate could continue to increase due to another industrial revolution. Therefore, supporting youths is vital for a sustainable future. Mr. Kung Phoak added that various programs have been set up to support a variety of issues, such as poverty, youths, social protection of workers, and social protection of children who are victims of trafficking and online sexual exploitation.

The Objectives of the Meeting



Mr. Toru Kajiwara, Director of the Office of International Cooperation, International Affairs Division, Minister's Secretariat, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare explained the purpose and summary of this meeting which were also touched upon in the opening remarks. He also explained what the participants can

expect over the next three days. Mr. Kajiwara recapped the theme of the panel sessions; the first panel session will cover establishing social protection for preventing poverty in which various policies and mechanisms will be looked at to prevent poverty; the second panel session will look at collaboration in health/welfare services for children/youths needing support, and capacity development for human resources in local communities; the third panel session will focus on the support for economic independence, including employment of parents with youths/children; the final panel session will discuss the roles of the national government, local government, community, and relevant organizations towards eradicating poverty.

Keynote Speech

The Poverty Among Japanese Children and Youths: Issues and Policies

Dr. Aya Abe, Professor, Tokyo Metropolitan University began the keynote speech by mentioning that many people, including Japanese, do not think there is poverty in Japan because it is hard to see. After Japan's rapid economic recovery following World War 2, the Japanese society did not believe that there was poverty in Japan. As a result, the Ministry of Health and Welfare stopped measuring the number of households with low living standards in 1965. There was a notion that Japan achieved an egalitarian society.



The 1990s provided the first visible signs of poverty in Japan by the emergence of homeless people. The government was in denial that poverty was a social issue, claiming that homelessness was caused by laziness, alcoholism, or personal preferences. However, after the Lehman Shock, the Japanese society discovered poverty as a social issue. In 2009, the government officially announced the poverty rate, which was significant because the government officially recognized it for the first time. The government then started to monitor the poverty rate and set a definition of poverty as 50% of the national median. The people in poverty were having difficulties meeting basic living needs because social norms were based on the median income rates.

Dr. Abe explained that when looking at the child poverty rate by family type, there is a high poverty rate among lone-parent families. Considering the poverty rate of the working age by family type, lone families and lone parents have a high poverty rate. With regards to the poverty rate of the elderly by family type, lone families and lone parents suffer from high poverty rates.

Dr. Abe mentioned some positive aspects of Japan, including food security, the neonatal mortality rate, competency, and the "Not in Education, Employment, or Training" (NEET) rate. She also noted some poor aspects of Japan, including a lack of formal childcare, the Palma ratio, and the adolescent suicide rate.

Dr. Abe emphasized that the effects of youth poverty have different forms and impacts depending on the country. In Japan, signs of child poverty are seen in things like the suicide rate, low education, and the *hikikomori* phenomenon. In Japan, people do not see the effects of poverty on the street as homeless people, teen pregnancies, or teen crime, as what occurs in other countries.

To illustrate child poverty, Dr. Abe explained that it does not mean that children cannot have a smartphone. On the contrary, basic needs, such as food, are not being met. The cost of basic needs, such as for education, are fixed no matter what income status you are in. The only cost that can be cut is food. Elaborating on this point, Dr. Abe described that obesity rates are higher among children in lower income families because they consume cheap, low quality food.

In Tokyo, about 3% of all children live in households that have issues in meeting basic housing needs such as electricity, gas, and water. Regarding academic achievement, children who have the most difficulties are in low a socioeconomic status (SES). Low SES children also miss out on valuable experience such as going to the beach, visiting museums, going camping, etc., because those things cost money.

In summary, while overall performance of Japanese children is good, there are some indicators of bad performance. The average academic achievement and health status does not show the whole situation. Dr. Abe showed quotes of people from surveys who are in poverty. Among the quotes, it was clear that basic needs such as healthcare, education, and rent are big issues.

Characteristics of poverty in Japan show that family structure is the biggest factor which determines the living standard. The family structure has been changing. Two-parent families are decreasing and single-mother or single-father families are increasing. Another characteristic of poverty in Japan shows that unemployment is not the issue, but the working-poor is. The percentage of the non-regular workers is increasing. If the father and mother are both non regular workers, then their wage does not increase with age. So, children get older in these households and their higher education is very difficult to afford. The third characteristic of poverty in Japan is the government plays a very little role in alleviating poverty. The population receiving welfare is small; child allowance benefit is almost universal by age; child rearing allowance for low-income

single mothers is low; and the cost of higher education which parents/students must pay is one of the highest among the OECD. Comparing child poverty rates before and after tax and transfers among OECD countries, only in Japan the after-tax and transfer poverty rate is higher than the before-tax and transfer poverty rate. Dr. Abe expressed that this is occurring because of a rigid society based on outdated family and gender norms including the social security system based on the “standard family” system.



Dr. Howard L. Sobel, Coordinator, Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health Division of NCD and Health through the Life-Course, World Health Organization, Western Pacific Regional Office began his talk by showing a short video explaining early essential newborn care (EENC). Dr. Sobel

explained the targets for all EENC member states by 2020 which included at least 80% birth facilities implementing EENC, at least 90% of births attended by skilled birth attendants, and a reduced national and subnational neonatal mortality rate.

Dr. Sobel continued to emphasize the importance and necessity for babies to have skin to skin contact and breastfeeding, adding that breastfeeding has both short term and long term benefits. Furthermore, a low breastfeeding rate leads to financial burden in the form of global expenditure.

Dr. Sobel mentioned the benefits of continuous kangaroo mother care (KMC) which involves skin to skin contact between the newborn and mother, early and exclusive breastfeeding, and close monitoring of illness. To elaborate on continuous KMC, he noted that it is associated with a lower risk of neonatal death, morbidity and hypothermia. Dr. Sobel concluded his talk by showing a documentary emphasizing the points and importance of EENC which include immediate drying and delayed cord clamping, skin to skin contact, and early exclusive breastfeeding.

Dr. Kenji Kuno, Senior Advisor (Social Welfare), Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) began his talk on enabling and inclusive employment support including supported employment and job coaches for youths with disabilities. Dr. Kuno explained why he chose to talk about the employment of youths with disabilities. Social exclusion and substantial opportunities are key points in defining poverty. Therefore, people with disabilities experience poverty because they experience social exclusion and loss of opportunities due to their condition. Focusing on income poverty, one in six people have a disability.



Dr. Kuno went on to describe what and where disability is. People might say that disability is in the person because they, for example, cannot walk; or disability is in the stairs that are difficult or impossible for physically disabled people to climb, or in the shop that has no wheelchair access. Dr. Kuno explained that using empowerment and enablement can be used as an approach to alleviating the issue of unaccommodation to disabilities in society. In addition, in order to accommodate disabilities, diversity inclusive development was emphasized. This included changing the person's integration or changing social inclusion. Dr. Kuno illustrated this by trying to fit a star through a round hole in a box; either the star could be changed to integrate into the round hole, or the hole could be changed in order to include the star.

Dr. Kuno then discussed people with disabilities in the work force and how a job coach supports them. Matching disabled people with the job is not the correct approach. Instead, the job coach approach is to reconstruct the job. The job coach will consider what tasks the disabled person could do, and they focus on those tasks. The job requirement is analyzed and restructured in order to suit the disabled person.

Another approach is systematic instruction which involves four levels of intervention. At the top level, the most difficult would be verbal instruction; the next level down to gesture; the next level down is modeling; the most basic level is physical prompts. These steps are used by the job coach to provide four levels of instruction to a person with learning disabilities.

One obstacle to overcome is the transition from welfare, school, and/or healthcare to employment. Dr. Kuno explained that there are various employment support services and legislation in effect which support the transition. Companies and organizations, such as Uniqlo, are employing people with disabilities because they truly believe that people with disabilities are valuable to the workforce.

Japan had the opportunity to share the job coaching experience in Malaysia. Training courses were given in Japan by JICA. The retention rate after six months of workers with learning disabilities with job coaches is very high. This high retention rate is due to the presence of job coaches. Job coach resources are spreading around ASEAN, and JICA is working to provide as much support as possible for the ASEAN region.

The floor was opened to questions for Dr. Kuno. A delegate from Myanmar mentioned that they would like more collaboration with JICA and job coaches. A delegate from China noted that they appreciate Dr. Kuno's point of integrating people with disabilities into society, including the job coach program. Mr. Phoak asked what Dr. Kuno thinks about actually engaging the private sector to get more people with disabilities employed. Dr. Kuno answered that it depends on each country's situation. It succeeded in Japan because of incentive programs. In terms of Malaysia, they do not have so many incentives, however, they enhance their workforce by using people with disabilities as opposed to bringing in foreigners. A delegate from Singapore asked if there are punitive measures against organizations which do not meet the necessary quotas in Japan, and Dr. Kuno answered that organizations which do not meet the quota do have to pay a fine. A delegate from Singapore commended the fact that Japan has implemented laws in support of employing people with disabilities, because Singapore chooses to provide incentives as opposed to make laws.

Panel Session 1: Establishing Social Protection for Poverty Prevention



Dr. Hideto Iketani, Professor, Tokyo Heisei University began the introduction speech by touching upon the characteristics of livelihood protection. The aim of livelihood protection is to provide assistance to citizens who cannot survive on their own income for various reasons in order to guarantee a minimum quality

of life as stipulated in Japan and enable the citizens to live independently. Livelihood protection is provided to individuals when they still cannot survive after utilizing all of their assets and working capacity.

When the income of all members of the household is below the minimum cost of living, the shortfall is paid out in the form of livelihood protection. There are no criteria for livelihood protection based on age or sex. Unemployed people with the capacity to work are eligible if they are seriously engaged in job hunting but are unable to find work. Individuals who are employed but whose income is below the standard of livelihood protection in Japan are eligible to receive livelihood protection payouts equivalent to the difference between their salary and the standard. Dr. Iketani explained the developments in the changes of livelihood protection beneficiaries, and concluded by noting a few years after the end of World War 2, the number of beneficiaries was high at approximately 1 in every 50 citizens.

The moderator, Mr. Kung Phoak, mentioned that there are many critical challenges in order to reduce and prevent poverty. Society is facing unprecedented changes in terms of the kinds of jobs that are being lost and created as a result of the next industrial revolution. Mr. Kung Phoak introduced the panel for this session and invited



them to explain what their countries are doing in order to establish social protection to

battle poverty.



Ms. Ren Xiuli, Director-level Official, Ministry of Human Resource and Social Security, China introduced China's social security system. There are three main challenges in China, one of which is targeting poverty alleviation. For poverty alleviation, the Ministry focuses on employment, social security, and skill development.

Regarding employment, the Ministry will support poverty relief workshops to provide various support. Considering China's social security, the government emphasizes social security by establishing the multilevel social security system which is aimed at covering all areas, and provides adequate and sustainable social security. The first of China's achievements is the establishment of the social security system including the basic pension system, basic medical insurance system, work injury system, unemployment insurance, and the maternity insurance system. Secondly, the coverage of social security has been continuously expanding. Thirdly, the social security fund has been continuously increasing and the level of social security has been enhanced. Fourthly, the public service system for social security has been basically established. Some challenges that China faces include the slowing down of the global economy, the acceleration of an ageing society, urbanization, and the emergence of new forms of employment.

Dr. San San Aye, Director General, Department of Social Welfare, Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement presented on the social protection in Myanmar. Social protection in Myanmar includes policies, legal instruments, programs, benefits, and services for individuals. The first type of social protection is social assistance, then social insurance, social services, and labor market intervention.



For the social protection flagship program, the focus is across the life cycle from early childhood/maternity to the old age. The maternal and child cash transfer program's goal is to improve the nutritional status of mothers and children during the first 1,000 days of life. The program includes a cash allowance, and monthly social and behavior change communication awareness sessions. The national social pension's aim is to improve income security for people of older ages. The integrated social protection system provides services for vulnerable individuals. For social security reforms, the goal is to provide effective medical care and benefits which encompass IT, medical, administrative, and legal reforms. Some advantages of the reforms include making processes easier and more efficient. To conclude, Dr. Aye mentioned that Myanmar is expanding social protection programs, and implementing new programs.



Mr. Richard Tan, SOMSWD Singapore, Senior Director, Customer and International Relations Division, Ministry of Social and Family Development explained Singapore's approach to social security. Singapore's mission is to nurture resilient individuals, strong families, and a caring society. The government

strongly believes that individuals must be resilient, which encompasses self-reliance and social responsibility to give back to society. Also, strong families are vital for a nation. The family should act as the first line of support, not the government. In addition, having many helping hands and a caring society greatly contribute to building a strong society.

Fundamental principles of Singapore include emphasis on work and personal responsibility; partnership between the private and public sectors; government support for essential needs; and progressive and targeted social transfers. Mr. Tan explained that the pillars of social security in Singapore are education in which compulsory education and lifelong learning are implemented; compulsory savings in which employers and employees are forced to save in the form of the Central Provident Fund; home ownership in the form of available public housing so everyone has a roof over their heads; healthcare; and workfare, which is an income supplement from the government and training scheme. Vouchers are given to poor and needed to cover what they have

paid. Exemption was not favored in Singapore because the rich also unnecessarily benefit.

Mr. Tan explained that social safety nets in Singapore include ComCare, MediFund, and Silver Support. ComCare provides long term assistance for those who are permanently unable to work, short to medium-term assistance for those who are unemployed, assistance for children, and community support.

To conclude, Mr. Tan noted that Singapore is facing challenges similar to other ASEAN countries such as the ageing population and shrinking families, increasing retirement age, rising cost of living, sustaining the cost of the social safety net, and diminishing personal responsibility.

The moderator opened the floor to any questions from the delegates. A question was posed to Dr. Aye about what a challenge is of different schemes, synergies, and a less burden for the administration. Dr. Aye highlighted the challenges around the Myanmar National Social Protection Strategic Plan. She also noted that they prioritize challenges in order to tackle the most urgent and important ones first. In order to solve collaboration challenges, Myanmar formulated a committee for national level social protection.

The moderator posed a question to Mr. Tan about challenges and sustainability solutions in Singapore. Mr. Tan answered that they are learning from other countries how to manage challenges, but a key point is that Singapore must continue to grow its economy. If the economy does not grow, then providing sustainability will become increasingly difficult. The most important strategy is to contribute to the economy. Other than the ageing population, Singapore has an ageing housing issue. The government is looking into revaluing the housing in order to increase the value.

Dr. Iketani explained that Japan hopes that the economy will grow. Compared to the past, it will be difficult to grow as rapidly. Most of the social security issues are focused on the elderly, not children. That is an issue for the political decision makers considering that children cannot vote.

Panel Session 2: Collaboration in Health/Welfare Services for Children/Youths Needing Support, and Capacity Development for Human Resources in Local Community

Dr. Yukio Shimbo, Professor, Kanagawa, University of Human Services spoke on child poverty and the intergenerational chain of poverty. There were five points which Dr. Shimbo touched upon: why it is difficult to see poverty, the second generation of poverty, the intergenerational chain of poverty, policy responses to child poverty, and the importance of the periods before and after birth.



Considering why seeing poverty is difficult, the reasons include the fact that people feel more settled when they are together with others who are in a similar economic class. Due to that fact, it is difficult for people in situations of poverty to realize their own level of poverty; and few people in the middle-income class and above have people in poverty around them.

To explain the second generation of poverty, Dr. Shimbo mentioned that the first generation of poverty involves a family's income which decrease during the child's growth period. The second generation of poverty has difficulties to fulfill the need for food immediately after birth, and it is difficult to build the mental and physical foundations which interferes with learning and life.

The intergenerational chain of poverty includes an insufficiency from the time of birth to when children start elementary school. Once they are in school, children get some treatment from the educators in the school. If the children are poor before starting school, measures are insufficient.

Policy responses to child poverty include emotional responses to parents, recognition of the need for economic support, the discovery of relative poverty, the need for employment support, the need for scholarships, importance of early education, renewed

recognition of the importance of food, and recognition of the importance of the period before and after birth. Lastly, the periods before and after birth are important for making life choices by both the mother and the child.



Mr. Taro Uchida presented on the support for youths in Yokohama, Japan. He started by explaining the phenomenon of *hikikomori*. The term refers to people who avoid social participation for more than 6 months. In order to combat this phenomenon, Yokohama has created a mid-term, four-year plan. The goal is to realize

the independence of youths facing difficulties such as *hikikomori*. Also, support will be provided in phases corresponding to the condition of the person in question. Some support services include providing consultations to help youths become independent.

The Yokohama City Youth Consultation Center aims to provide consultation for youths as well as support for their independence and social participation. In the Regional Youth Plaza, there is a place of belonging for *hikikomori* who are able to emerge from their homes; they have somewhere to go. There are three youth support systems which cover all stages of *hikikomori*. First, the Youth Consultation Center covers the beginning severe situations. Second, the Regional Youth Plaza provides space for youths to visit. Finally, the Youth Support Station supports employment and follow-ups. Yokohama has a collaborative system to support youths which are experiencing difficulties. In addition, the Youth Consultation Center provides skill improvement training for supporter development. This training allows supporters to better care for *hikikomori*. Yokohama has many layers of efforts to provide support at places that are close to youths, such as seminars/consultation sessions.

Ms. Rosmahwati Ishak, Deputy Director General, Department of Social Welfare Malaysia, Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development presented on the collaboration in health/welfare services for children/youths needing support and capacity development for human resources in local communities in Malaysia. She started by mentioning the demography of children in Malaysia, and added that men are the majority of the labor force members.



Ms. Ishak explained that the National Council for Children is responsible for advising and making recommendations to the government on issues pertaining to the protection, custody, rehabilitation, development, and participation of children, and the development of programs for educating children. National policies include the national adolescent health policy which supports adolescents through health, lifestyle, and positive living. In addition, the National Reproductive and Social Health Education Policy raises awareness of reproductive health and education, and to improve the effectiveness of social education.

Programs and initiatives in Malaysia include “My Beloved Generation Program” which provides comprehensive and holistic intervention to assist teenagers, single parents, and new babies in line with Millennium Development Goals (MDG) four and five. Another program, Kafe@Teen, targets youths aged 13 to 24 by providing information related to psychosocial issues, and counseling for reproductive health. Finally, the Child Activity Center was set up in strategic high risk areas for children to meet up and engage in activities. To conclude, Ms. Ishak described the Children and Young Persons Act 1996, which is an act to regulate the employment of children and young persons.



Ms. Wilma Naviamos, Regional Director, Department of Social Welfare and Development Field Office MiMaRoPa, Department of Social Welfare and Development explained the situation in the Philippines starting with the demographics. She explained the mandates of the Department of Social Welfare and Development

(DSWD), the Department of Health (DOH), and the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE). To elaborate on the departments, Ms. Naviamos explained that the DSWD aims to implement programs, projects, and services that will alleviate poverty and empower disadvantaged individuals, families, and communities for an improved quality of life. The DOH is the overall technical authority on health that provides national policy direction and develops national plans, technical standards, and guidelines on health. The DOLE is the policy making, programming, coordinating, and administrative entity of the executive branch of the government in the field of labor and employment.

Ms. Naviamos highlighted five support programs for children and youths. The first is called the First 1,000 Days which aims to improve the nutritional status of pregnant women and their newborns. One goal of the effort is to reduce childhood obesity and malnutrition. The second countermeasure is the Supplementary Feeding Program which addresses the immediate nutritional and health needs of children. The feeding program is managed by the parents from a prepared menu. The children are monitored throughout the program and guidance for the parents is provided. The third program is the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program which invests in the health and education of children from poor households. Its objectives include provisions of social assistance and social development. The Adolescent Health and Youth Development Program aims to improve the health status of the adolescent and enable them to fully enjoy their right to health. The Guaranteed PhilHealth Membership for Indigents primarily focuses on value financial risk protection and helps people from falling into poverty from paying for health and medical care. All identified indigents are automatically enrolled and covered under the program. Finally, Ms. Naviamos touched on the various capacity development programs for human resources.

Ms. Teppawan Pornawalai, Expert on youth development for Department of Children and Youth, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security began her presentation by explaining the Child Support Grant Project which targets newborn babies in low-income families and single parents. The objectives of this project offsets the



costs that support quality care and appropriate development of a newborn, and ensures a child's right for survival and livelihood as stated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This project provides opportunities for parents-to-be and new parents to receive services such as maternity information, and requires families to get in touch with a medical team. These medical teams follow up with mothers and check on the long-term development of the children. The project results in babies receiving medical service at an early stage and significantly reduces the number of child delayed-development; and the percentage of newborns under the project who received welfare and health services is equal to the percentage of common newborns. The project has proven to be successful in identifying targets, listen to their needs, and introducing welfare and health service from the government.



The panel session moderator, Dr. Pattiselanno Roberth Johan, Senior Advisor to the Minister for Health Decentralization, Secretariat of General, Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, asked Ms. Naviamos to provide details about the First 1000 Days program. Ms. Naviamos replied that the program

provides health services to newborns and mothers. The services ensure that the baby and mother will grow healthily, lessen malnutrition rates, make sure the mother is healthy, deliver the baby in a clean medical facility, and provide micronutrients and immunizations to the baby for the first year of life.

Panel Session 3: Support for Economic Independence, Including Employment of Parents with Youths/Children

Ms. Yumiko Watanabe, Chairperson of NPO Kids' Door started by introducing the initiatives and issues on empowerment toward the economic independence for children and youths. Ms. Watanabe explained the background of the NPO, Kids' Door, with a vision to realize a society in which all children can have hopes and dreams for the future. The NPO's activities involve elementary school students to 25 year olds from low income families. College students provide free study groups for junior high school students in order to help the younger students to catch up in their studies.



Ms. Watanabe explained that children also do not have summer vacation experiences, so the NPO provides fun trips like fishing for the children to participate in. In addition, the NPO provides group meals to create a place and feeling of belonging. Currently, the NPO focuses on high schoolers because there is mostly little or no support for education and nurturing youths after graduation from junior high school. Youths from low income families have to earn their own living expenses while studying, which leads to dropping out or other consequences. The NPO aims to prevent youths from dropping out of high school and offers a relearning program to provide support for achieving upper secondary school graduate certifications. Through support from the early stages, it is possible to eliminate the period of social isolation and to minimize economic loss and welfare.



Mr. Sokme Keo, Chief of Bureau for Child Welfare Department, Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation summarized his presentation due to time restrictions. Mr. Keo briefly and quickly touch on Cambodia's alternative care modeling

that is divided in to community based care and residential care institution; and Cambodia's community based care and supporting economic independence approach to support youths and children by supporting food, education, and medical care, and to support parents and guardians by providing vocational training and financial support so they can work and earn an income.

Mr. Keo added that effort is being made to break the chain of the poverty for youths, children, and parents. In order to do this, government services, youths/children and parents, NGOs/private services, and community support need to contribute to breaking the chain. Cambodia is considering the next step for supporting economic independence including employment of parents with youths/children to break the chain of poverty.

The presenter from Cambodia explained the trends of health indicators related to maternal child health which showed that morality rate is decreasing, children receiving vaccines is increasing, and stunting is decreasing. Mr. Keo concluded his presentation describing the health care services support to mother, children, and youths at public health facilities. The important points covered in this presentation were that attention is given to parents and economic independence of parents; and the government is in collaboration with NGOs in order to make programs effective.

Mr. Marjuki, Senior Adviser to the Minister on Social Accessibilities, Ministry of Social Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia started by explaining that the unemployment rate of 30% in Indonesia is a result of education. He explained the country's support programs as follows. The country has the Family Hope



Programme which aims to improve the quality of Indonesian human resources by providing health and education access to the poor. The Social Assistance for Persons with Severe Disabilities Program aims to ease the burden of daily expenditure, to meet basic needs, and to keep the person with the disability healthy. Indonesia also provides support for child health through occupational health such as maternity leave for three months, nursery rooms in the workplace, and workplace safety. Various programs are delivered on the social welfare programs.



Ms. Mega Irena, Assistant Director, ASEAN Socio-Culture Community (ASCC), ASEAN Secretariat opened the discussion to the floor. One participant asked for some examples of the mechanisms used for human resources, preparing children, and having a workforce for technical skills in Japan. In addition, the moderator

asked Ms. Watanabe about sustaining the program of volunteerism and instilling the volunteerism spirit; and asked the Cambodian presenter if they have a monitoring mechanism to track how many families have increased their income from the program; and asked the Indonesian presenter to elaborate on the regulations around occupational health and safety.

Ms. Watanabe answered that the university students who volunteer are remarkable. The children who meet college students as volunteers get to see that there is a place for students to go beyond high school. To keep the university students motivated, Ms. Watanabe explained that they are focused on the training program and training them as coaches. In addition, feedback comes from the children and volunteers, which promotes each other's improvement. She explained that she does expect the working force to decline and they want to provide children paths to higher education. Upgrading educational programs are underway in Japan. Efforts are being made to ensure that children in poverty are not left behind in the education system, and that they have equal opportunities.

The Cambodian presenter answered that monitoring of the children by NGOs or some organizations to ensure that they are following the minimum policy standard is underway.

An Indonesian delegate in the audience elaborated on the regulations around occupational health and safety. Laws were put in place to implement safety, and if those laws are not followed, then the offender will be charged as a criminal and forced to pay a fine.

Ms. Irena concluded the session by thanking the panelists for sharing their knowledge.

Thursday, 6 December 2018

Study Tour:

The delegates engaged in study visits to various facilities in Yokohama city to study health care and social welfare services. The study tour involved visits to the Kanagawa Prefectural Government Office including a talk from the Governor of Kanagawa Prefecture, the Youth Exchange and Support Space, the Yokohama Youth Support Station, and the Kanagawa Prefectural Support Center for Children's Independent Living including a talk from the Director of the Children Support Division of the Welfare and Children's Future Bureau of the Kanagawa Prefectural Government.



Kanagawa Prefectural Government Office



Youth Exchange and Support Space



Yokohama Youth Support Station



Kanagawa Prefectural Support Center
for Children's Independent Living

Friday, 7 December 2018

Review of the Study Tour

Mr. Lewis Wong, Senior Assistant Director (International Relations), Customer and International Relations Division, Ministry of Social and Family Development, Singapore moderated the review of the study tour session. He started by describing the facilities that were visit which promote youth support, help youths find employment, and youth interaction with society.



Mr. Wong opened the floor to the participants to share their thoughts on the study tour. The first participant to speak on this topic mentioned how great the programs are; however, they are lacking manpower to take the same actions in their country. The next participant touched on what the Governor of Kanagawa spoke about. She mentioned that her country is worried about the technology issue. Especially, they would like to have an electronic-based record system instead of paper-based record system because the accessibility of the electronic version is higher, and it is more useful. For the Youth Support Center and Kanagawa Prefectural Support Center for Children's Independent Living, the speaker mentioned that her country has similar centers, but they cannot provide such an advanced facility. The next participant commended the visits because they were useful and provided valuable information for each country. One thing that the speaker highlighted was the support stations because they not only help young people but also employ people. The important thing is to support youths, and there are many countries facing issues of helping their youths. The next participant mentioned that all ASEAN countries are facing the same things, such as ageing societies. The perception that we set in society is very important. If a person thinks a child is bad, then they will treat them that way. It is especially important to set a good perception of youths in poverty at the policy maker level. The next speaker expressed how impressed he was by the Governor's presentation and the facilities. The speaker mentioned that they do not have support space like the Sakura Living facility. The next speaker from China expressed how impressed she was with what the Japanese government has done to build

a more caring society from healthcare to skills development and job training. She mentioned that the participants learned a lot. The next speaker from the Philippines thanked the organizer for the study tour. The speaker mentioned that they are particularly pleased with the visit of the last facility. The concept of promoting independent living for children can be effective and helpful. The speaker also mentioned that they appreciate the fact that the facilities have Japanese names, such as sakura. They touched on the value of having a place for children and youths to go other than school and have peer-to-peer interactions. The next speaker from Singapore spoke on a challenge of Singapore which involves a facility that is provided to youths to gather, and get help in terms of jobs and personal problems. The challenge is that Singapore's youths tend to think of government establishment as places they do not want to go. Even though Singapore tried hard to provide spaces for youths, it is difficult to attract them there. Singapore does not have budget allocation for residential areas which also poses a challenge. The next speaker emphasized the importance of focusing on future workers and those living below the standard lifestyle. The speaker mentioned looking into different groups like single mothers, ex-convicts, an ex-drug addicts in order to enhance the work force. The final speaker spoke on foster systems to keep children out of institutions, and her desire to learn more about foster systems in Japan.

Mr. Wong concluded the session by expressing the merit and appreciation of the tour, and noted that valuable knowledge was gained for the participants to bring back to their home countries. The meeting moderator also gave concluding remarks highlighting what Dr. Abe spoke on yesterday, addressing communication skills for children and not allowing children to be left behind, encourage sharing and close learning of best practices among local communities, and promoting social protection services.

Panel Session 4: The Roles of the National Government, Local Governments, Community, and Relevant Organizations Toward Eradicating Poverty



Ms. Akiko Taguchi, Director of the ILO Office for Japan started the panel session by giving a presentation on employment support towards the eradication of poverty and empowerment of children and youths (global trends and the International Labour Organization (ILO)'s initiatives). Ms. Taguchi highlighted

ILO's activities for the eradication of poverty which include four strategic objectives: employment creation, social protection, rights at work, and social dialogue. In order to reduce poverty in the next 10 years, millions of new jobs need to be created. In addition, there needs to be a substantial reorientation in favor of the poor, and changes in institutions, laws, regulations, and practices that tend to perpetuate poverty. Ms. Taguchi then described ILO's activities for empowerment of children and youths. She emphasized the importance of youth employment by highlighting trends and policies.

Child labor is an issue which needs to be addressed in ASEAN countries because the ratio is still high. In order to reduce child labor, Ms. Taguchi mentioned actions, such as free, quality public education, social protection systems, migration governance, conflict and disaster, and addressing debt bondage, that should be taken. Finally, Ms. Taguchi briefly listed recommendations which included the One UN Policy, strengthening partnerships, and sharing good practices.

A participant mentioned that compulsory education is not implemented in some rural areas of ASEAN countries. The participant asked Ms. Taguchi if the ILO has pushed for compulsory education. Ms. Taguchi answered that there is compulsory education; however, many children drop out. The ILO and other organizations are researching why children drop out, but it is a difficult challenge to manage. It is not only the education system, but also changing the mindset of parents and citizens to make attending school natural.

A participant asked Ms. Taguchi to elaborate on the One UN Policy. Ms. Taguchi

answered that, in order to effectively implement a UN project, it is important for different UN organizations which have different skill sets to collaborate. By mixing their various skill sets, more can be effectively accomplished.

Mr. Phongsaysack Inthalath, Director General, Department of Labour Management, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Lao People's Democratic Republic (PRD) presented on poverty reduction and empowerment of children in Lao PDR. Mr. Inthalath touched on four points about how the Lao government plans to



reduce poverty and enhance society. First, Lao PDR has been implementing the 8th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (8th NSED Plan). Priorities of this plan illustrate the government's roles in transitioning to a more market-based economy, that decision making must be more community-based, the introduction of extensive public administration reforms to create a streamlined, low-cost administration, and strengthening the capacity of the government to better fulfill their roles. From this plan, the two main outcomes are social protection benefits to all people and the development of human resources which lead to poverty reduction, and universal access to quality education and health services.

The second point that Mr. Inthalath explained was economic growth and poverty reduction. He noted that the economy has been steadily growing in the past few decades; investments are being made into various infrastructures; the government is working to resolve low education in rural areas; and the government has set up a poverty-reduction fund mainly used for development in the poorest districts of Laos.

Thirdly, Mr. Inthalath explained Laos' social protection and children assistance. He mentioned the social security fund that provides coverage for public and private employees; a community-based health insurance fund with a free healthcare policy for children under the age of five; and new compulsory education laws for children to finish lower secondary school.

Lastly, Mr. Inthalath elaborated on youth worker protection. He talked about the

minimum age of working which was set to 14 years old; setting up and implementing the National Action Plan on Prevention and Elimination of Child Labour; and conducting a survey on child labor aimed at eliminating hard child labor.



Ms. Huong Thu Le, Official, ASEAN Cooperation Division/International Cooperation Department, Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs presented on the poverty line in Vietnam, poverty reduction in Vietnam, and roles of the national and local governments and community towards eradicating poverty. The delegate

explained in detail the poverty line and determination of poverty in Vietnam. Ms. Le mentioned that the poverty line in rural areas is lower than in urban areas. To evaluate poverty, access to basic social services including education, health, housing, clean water and sanitation, and information are evaluated.

Vietnam promotes the strength of three pillars to eradicate poverty: the community, the national government, and the poor. The roles of the national government include undertaking various projects which involve investment in infrastructure in poor districts; support for development, diversification, and development of a poverty reduction model; and support for workers in poor households. For the roles of the community, efforts include spiritual and financial support, donations, free education and vocational training, employment, and care for orphans. The role of the poor include overcoming difficulties and knowledge about the supportive resources.

The Vietnamese delegate concluded her presentation by describing the achievement in poverty reduction in Vietnam. Since 1993, the poverty rate has dramatically decreased from around 60% to around 10%.

The moderator, Ms. Shukuko Koyama, Assistant Professor, Waseda University, opened the floor to questions or comments about the presentations from Laos and Vietnam. Ms. Koyama touched on the One UN Policy from her experience. She mentioned that one of the challenges was creating a



connection between support for the children and support for youths. There are policy gaps between children and youths or young adults. Social protection needs to be extended from the ages of children to people who are entering the work force.

A participant from Malaysia commented on the topic of employment support. They said that first, people have to emphasize the access of employment such as infrastructure and transportation. Second, policies on how to promote work-life balance should be implemented, so children's parents have time to work and care for their children. Third, to make models which allow access to good economic status for all.

Another participant touched on child education. There are some pockets of children that have not finished basic education. This phenomenon comes from many factors; it is not just about changing the mindset of parents. In addition, governments may not make education compulsory because it is complicated and multi-dimensional.

The final comment from the participants mentioned the merit of the education system in China because China brings education to the most remote areas of the country.

Adoption of Recommendations

Mr. Kajiwara started this session by reading out the preamble which was similar to last year. There were no comments from the delegates.

Mr. Kajiwara read out paragraphs one through six without any comments or amendments from the delegates.

The delegates went through eight recommendations. Mr. Kajiwara read recommendations one through seven without any comments or amendments from the delegates.

Mr. Kajiwara read recommendation eight and checked it with the participants. A delegate from Singapore asked if they could mention to focus on rural areas where there is more poverty and involve other ministries beyond health, labour, and welfare. Mr. Kajiwara answered that it was mentioned in paragraphs one and two, and he proposed that after “with a particular focus on society” add “in particular, rural areas” in recommendation one.

Regarding recommendations one and two, a delegate from Malaysia proposed to add “employment prospects for children and youths” in order to avoid child labor. Also, the delegate expressed their desire to add “sharing of good practices between local governments.” In response, Mr. Kajiwara mentioned adding “employment prospects” before “employment opportunities” looks a bit awkward, so he suggested using “employment prospects and opportunities.” Mr. Kajiwara added “sharing good practices within countries” to the recommendation seven paragraph.

Mr. Kajiwara highlighted all instances of “social and economic independence” to confirm it fits. A participant suggested that “social and economic independence” should begin with “towards” because it shows the pursuit of social and economic independence as a goal.

A delegate from Indonesia suggested to identify “gaps and strengths” in recommendation three.

On recommendation two, the moderator recommended to add “rural development” after

“employment” to make it more specific.

Finally, Mr. Kajiwara covered the *Further agreed that* matters. A delegate advised to add “as well as ASEAN+3 Senior Official Meetings on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication” to the end of the second paragraph. A participant recommended to add “UNICEF” to recommendation eight. Mr. Kajiwara added “All participants resolve to take appropriate action to implement the above recommendations in accordance with their respective national and local contexts” to the first paragraph after a suggestion from a participant. The recommendations were agreed upon.



Closing Remarks

Mr. Kajiwara concluded the 16th ASEAN and Japan High Level Officials Meeting on Caring Societies, thanking the participants and looking forward to the next meeting.