

5. Gender Equality for Men, Children, People Facing Living Difficulties, and the Elderly

■ Gender Equality for Men

One of the major impediments to realizing gender equality is the perception of fixed gender roles that has been formed in individuals' consciousness over many years. Although this way of thinking is changing along with the times, it still remains deep-rooted, and is particularly strong among men. The government aims to create a society that is easy for men to live in as well as women, and is conducting researches and studies on elimination of the perception of fixed gender roles that men have about themselves. It is also working to broaden the base of gender equality by increasing assistance with education about perceptions, consultation activities, and other activities to gain men's understanding.

With the aim of creating a society in which both men and women can have a work-life balance, the government is promoting reconsideration of working styles and creation of an environment in which men can participate in child care, family care, and community activities.

Support is also being given so that retired men can actively participate in community and other activities.

- A. Promotion of understanding of significance of gender equality for men
- B. Education for corporations about perceptions of male managerial positions
- C. Improvement of the workplace environment to enable men's participation in the home and in the community
- D. Support for regional efforts to enable men's participation in the home and in the community
- E. Improvement of education on preventing violence between men and women
- F. Promotion of food education
- G. Establishment of consultation systems for men and maintenance of their physical and mental health
- H. Other undertakings

■ Promotion of Understanding Gender Equality from Childhood, and Developing Far-Sighted Self-Awareness

The government is promoting understanding of gender equality from childhood, and making efforts to have children develop far-sighted self-awareness, so that the children who will be the leaders of the next generation can grow up making the most of their individuality and abilities and the base of gender equality will expand. It is also implementing health and sex education so that boys and girls can appropriately take care of themselves according to their health conditions and gender differences, and promoting measures against issues that have enormous influences on health.

- A. Promotion of understanding of gender equality through education
- B. Promotion of children's health management, maintenance, and improvement
- C. Other undertakings

■ Realization of Children's Healthy Growth and a Safe and Secure Environment

The government is creating an environment that aim to eradicate violence and medical system so that children can grow up healthily. It is also promoting undertakings in which society as a whole supports children, such as breaking the cycle of children's poverty.

- A. Comprehensive measures against violence and against abuse of children
- B. Improvement of media literacy
- C. Measures against child pornography
- D. Measures against child prostitution
- E. Active promotion of the "Japan's 2009 Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons"
- F. Creation of an environment in which parents and children can live with peace of mind
- G. Undertakings for society as a whole to support children
- H. Other undertakings

■ Promotion of Support for Single-Parent Households

Under the 2003 Revised Act on Welfare of Mothers with Dependents and Widows (Act No. 129 of 1964), independence assistance measures for mothers raising children alone are being comprehensively developed. Such measures include preferential enrollment in day-care centers, support measures for child-care and daily life such as projects to assist with daily life, projects for centers that support employment and independence for single mothers, employment assistance measures such as support stipends to assist the independence of single-mother households, measures to ensure expenses for raising children such as establishing child-raising expense consultation centers, provision of child-care allowances, and economic support measures using loans for the welfare of mothers with dependents and widows.

In fiscal 2009, due to expansion of “Anshin Kodomo Kikin funds” that were established by prefectural governments in fiscal 2008, assistance was further developed by providing day-care services when single parents undergo vocational training and assisting local governments that actively promote at-home employment of single parents.

Since June 2009, for advanced skills training promotion benefits that reduce the burden of daily living costs during the period people study at an educational organization for the purpose of obtaining qualifications such as those to become a nurse, the amount of benefits provided has been increased and for people who began their studies before the end of fiscal 2011 the period of benefit provision has been extended. Other improvements of measures to support the independence of single-mother households are also being made, such as decreasing the interest rate for loans for the welfare of mothers with dependents and widows and making it possible to receive such loans even without a guarantor.

In addition, in August 2010 child-care allowances were expanded to include single-father households and since then improvements are being made in measures to support the independence of single-parent households.

Further, the single-mother addition computation for welfare that was abolished in April 2009 was restored in order to eliminate child poverty, and payments (JPY 23,260 per month (when there is one child and living at home in the place categorized as Areal) began again in December 2009.

■ The Elderly

As of 2012, one in every 5 men and one in every 4 women in Japan is elderly. There is a tendency for elderly people to face harsh economic situations, such as single elderly women who have little income. In addition, divorced elderly women are in a particularly difficult situation because they cannot rely on their husband’s income or survivor’s pension and it is difficult to find new stable employment. Because in many cases women work in the form of irregular employment due to factors such as marriage, childbirth, and child-rearing and their period of employment tends to be short, there is also a tendency for their income from pensions, etc. in old age to be small. On the other hand, the problem of single elderly men being isolated in regions is becoming serious. It is believed that the number of households of single elderly people that can easily fall into these states of isolation or economic hardship will increase dramatically from now on due to the increase of people who never marry or who divorce.

The number of elderly women who require nursing care (approx. 3.08 million) is approximately 2.4 times that of elderly men who require nursing care (approx. 1.28 million). Because of reasons such as the high possibility that women will live alone due to their long life-spans, nursing care for elderly women is an important task.

The following is an introduction, for reference, of the public pension system and the nursing care insurance system, which are the main social security systems for the elderly in Japan. The public pension system was introduced as a mechanism for securing daily life in old age so that people can live independently and with peace of mind in their old age. All people aged 20 or over but under 60 who live in Japan are obligated to join the system (that is “universal pension coverage”). In principal, the age that people can begin to receive public pension payments is 65.

The nursing care insurance system was established in 2000 as a new mechanism for society as a whole to support nursing care for the elderly. The system makes it possible for users to make comprehensive use of, at their choice, nursing care that covers health, medical care, and welfare. In principal, nursing care insurance services are provided to people aged 65 or older who require nursing care.

In addition to these systems, other main measures for elderly people include securing employment opportunities so that elderly people can be economically self-sufficient, promoting their participation in society, supporting their self-sufficiency in daily life, and building a base of good medical and nursing care.