The 1st Meeting
of the ASEAN +3 Committee on Women
Bandar Sri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam
“Reducing the Feminization of Poverty with the Rights Based Approach”

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1. Introduction

- Council for Gender Equality
  - A Japanese government consultative body to address important national issues

- Specialist Committee on Monitoring and Gender Impact Assessment and Evaluation
  - Monitoring the implementation of government measures
  - Studying the influence of government measures on men and women

  - Studying the actual situation and background of people with financial difficulties and the implementation status of government measures, from a viewpoint of gender equality
2. Actual Situation of Financial Difficulties Faced by Women (1)

- Higher poverty rates for women than for men in most age groups
- The disparity widens as they age.

Source: Data from “Comprehensive Survey of Living Conditions (2007)” by Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare

Note: The relative poverty rate is defined as the share of the population in households with incomes below 50% of the median.
2. Actual Situation of Financial Difficulties Faced by Women (2)

- Higher poverty rates, particularly in aged single women and mother-child families.
- Transmission of poverty to the next generation observed in mother-child families.

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![Graph showing the comparison of financial difficulties between men and women across different household types.](image-url)
3. Background Information of Women with Financial Difficulties (1)

Deep-rooted “Stereotypical views of gender roles”

Pros and cons of the idea “men work outside and women stay at home taking care of the family”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Not sure/No response</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>88.3</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>30.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>30.7</td>
<td>26.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Men: 20.0 26.2 3.1 34.8 15.9
Women: 6.2 12.0 11.9 27.8 1.0

0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%
3. Background Information of Women with Financial Difficulties (2)

- Participation of women in the policy decision-making processes
  "Few women in decision-making processes"
  "Large wage disparity between men and women"

[Gender Empowerment Measure]

3. Background Information of Women with Financial Difficulties (3)

- Labor force participation rates by sex
  - "Difficulty for women to continue working"
  - "More women working as non-regular workers"

Note 1: Employees excluding executives of companies or corporations
Note 2: "Regular staffs" are officers and employees; and "dispatched workers/entrusted employees/others" are dispatched workers from temporary labor agencies, contract employees, entrusted employees, and others.
3. Background Information of Women with Financial Difficulties (4)

- Violence against women

  Tendency of being combined with various other difficulties

  <Difficulties that keep victims of spousal violence from being independent (examples)>

  - Having insufficient money to meet immediate living expenses 54.9%
  - Not recovered from physical and psychological damage 52.9%
  - Cannot transfer residential registration to the new address to keep it confidential 52.6%
  - No appropriate job available 36.7%
  - No skills for any job 26.6%

3. Background Information of Women with Financial Difficulties (5)

- Increasing tendency of poverty rates resulting from changes in the economy and society

  ⇒ Poverty among women becoming visible

<Changes in economy and society>

- **Changes in families**
  Increase in “single household” and “single-parent household”

- **Changes in employment and jobs**
  Increase in non-regular jobs
  Increase in unemployment without a safety net

- **Globalization**
  Financial difficulties in female foreign residents and their children
4. Measures Initiated by the Government (1)

- Measures to address an immediate financial crisis
  ⇒ “Fund for Child-rearing”
    - ¥100 billion (USD 1 billion) in 2008
      Improvement of childcare facilities and child-rearing environment
    - Additional ¥150 billion (USD 1.5 billion) in 2009
      Aid for mother-child families, including childcare services

<Specific measures>
- Provision of an environment where it is easier for mothers of single-parent families to work, and employment support services
- Childcare services during job training
4. Measures Initiated by the Government (2)

- Empowerment of women throughout the life cycle
  
  ⇒ Supporting women in their life planning by providing information on diversified subjects to help women live independent lives

<Specific measures>

- Provision of learning opportunities taking local circumstances into account
- Presenting various living options for each life stage
- Providing information on work-life balance
4. Measures Initiated by the Government (3)

- Movement toward a concerted effort to provide support
  
  ➔ Seeking a concerted effort among support organizations to address diversification of difficult situations and expansion of needs

<Specific measures>

- To help women with multiple difficulties become independent, cooperation among relevant support groups is necessary.
- The establishment of local networks has become increasingly important. To assist young people with difficulties, an act requiring all relevant organizations to cooperate with each other was established (2009).
5. Future Issues to be Addressed

- **Issues regarding the enhancement of abilities to become independent**
  - Consistent career and vocational education from elementary and secondary education stages

- **Issues regarding stable employment and working conditions**
  - Continuing efforts to provide equal access to employment opportunities for men and women
  - Promotion of work-life balance
  - Improvement of support services for those seeking reemployment
  - Neutral taxation and social security systems for women to choose a job

- **Issues regarding the formation of environments where parents and children can live at ease**
  - Attentive support services that take the circumstances of mother-child families into account
  - Consideration of providing preschool and high school education free of charge in addition to compulsory education

- **Issues regarding what the support infrastructure should be like**
  - Public relations activities and educational campaigns to change public awareness of gender roles
  - Provision of one-stop services for each support area and mutual cooperation among relevant fields
Thank you very much for your attention.