Overcoming Poverty through a Social Inclusion Approach:
The Status quo of Asia and Oceania in a Globalized Economy

December 9 – December 19, 2008
Overcoming Poverty through a Social Inclusion Approach: The Status quo of Asia and Oceania in a Globalized Economy

JENESYS East Asia Future Leaders Programme 2008 Report

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Foreword

The Japan Foundation organized an East Asia Future Leaders Programme in December 2008, inviting promising young intellectuals from 16 countries with various backgrounds to understand and discuss the various facets of poverty, taking Japan as a case study. We defined poverty not in terms of absolute poverty or relative poverty, but to see poverty as a state of social exclusion, which hinders people to: fully participate and develop their potential in the economy and society, access and benefit from the basic services and opportunities, participate in the decision-making process which affect their lives, and live a decent life that is in norm with the standard and cultures of their respective society. In this definition, poverty is not just a problem in the developing countries but a common issue that needs to be addressed universally, from the point of human rights and dignity, to alleviate people from inequality, isolation, humiliation, and despair, as well as from the point of economy as the contributing factors of poverty are increasingly more integrated and global.

The 11-day-programme under the Japan–East Asia Network of Exchange for Students and Youths (JENESYS) Programme was composed of lectures, discussions, visits to public and private organizations in Tokyo and other localities as well as writing and presenting a group paper in order to discuss and contemplate what each country, local government, civil society, the socially vulnerable themselves, as well as the region as a whole can do to overcome poverty.

Before the programme, some of the participants had doubts about what could be seen and observed about poverty in Japan, the second largest economy in the world. If you feel the same, we invite you to turn the pages for an “eye-opening experience”, a sentiment that was shared by many of the participants.

The experience, knowledge, output and the positive synergy emanated from the participants was equally an "eye-opening experience" for the organizers. Within their short duration in Japan, the participants not only understood the framework and mechanism of how people slide into poverty, but also were able to observe and analyze the cultural and social aspects of the Japanese society that undermines cohesion of people and community. Their incisive yet sympathetic observations and recommendations provide food for thought for all.

We would like to thank Dr. Aya Abe for her contribution as the Programme Advisor and for sharing her extensive knowledge and passion for poverty eradication with our participants, as well as to all the public and private organizations, municipalities and ministries who have kindly agreed to welcome our delegation and shared their invaluable experience and ideas through the sight visits and lectures.

With this publication, we hope that the information on poverty and social security in Japan provided by Dr. Abe and the observations of the participants will be shared to the public to raise public awareness on this issue, and advocate the simple fact that each individual can play a part in making a difference wherever we live.

The Japan Foundation

<Acknowledgement to the organizations/individuals who have made this programme possible (in order of visits)> NPO Moyai: Independent Life Support Center, Japanese Trade Union Confederation (RENGO), Yokohama Youth Support Station, the city of Yokohama, Kotobuki Supporters Exchange Association, the four gentlemen in Kotobuki-cho, Umaji Village, NPO Kamonohashi Project, Second Harvest, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA)
About JENESYS

At the Second East Asia Summit (EAS), held in January 2007, Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan, announced a large-scale youth exchange initiative of US$315 million, inviting around 6,000 youths every year to Japan mainly from the EAS member states, which consists of ASEAN countries, China, India, Korea and New Zealand for the next five years. Based on this initiative, the Government of Japan has launched the Japan-East Asia Network of Exchange for Students and Youths (JENESYS) Programme, which aims to deepen understanding of the different facets of the Japanese society including politics, diplomacy, economics and culture and to form the basis of future vision and construct firm solidarity among the East Asia Community through the promotion of mutual understanding among the younger generations in the region.

The Japan Foundation has been organizing a series of “East Asia Future Leaders Programme” as part of the JENESYS Programme, to promote intellectual exchanges among young intellectuals in various fields who have high potentials to become the future leaders in Asia and Oceania.
Programme Overview
Overcoming Poverty through a Social Inclusion Approach: The Status quo of Asia and Oceania in a Globalized Economy

The Japan Foundation organized an East Asia Future Leaders Programme to Japan in December 2008 under the Japan–East Asia Network of Exchange for Students and Youths (JENESYS) Programme. It is funded by the Japan-ASEAN Integration fund, and aims to deepen understanding of the different facets of the Japanese society including politics, diplomacy, economics and culture and to form the basis of future vision and construct firm solidarity among Asian countries which will promote mutual understanding of the future generation of the East Asia Community.

<Concept of this Programme>

The economic globalization has triggered widening disparity in the world and poverty is increasing even in the developed countries. Many scholars and economists are warning of the limitations of globalization and neo-liberalism. Developing effective social policies to deal with the new social risks are a common issue that needs to be addressed in each country.

This had led to a call for a “social inclusion” approach in making new policies which ensures that the marginalized and those in poverty can participate in the economy and society, access and benefit from the services and opportunities to lead a decent life in their respective society, participate in the decision-making process which affect their lives, and protect their basic human rights.

This programme will focus on poverty and social inclusion taking Japan as a case study in order to discuss and contemplate what each country, local government, NPO, the socially vulnerable, and citizens can do to tackle this issue and what kind of cooperation and could be possible as an Asia/Oceania region as a whole in this globalized economy.

The programme is composed of lectures, discussions, visits to public and private organizations in Tokyo and other localities and writing and presenting a group paper on the said topic. It is conducted in the hope that the participant will find inspiration through the discussions with other young leaders of different backgrounds/countries, which will lead to the formulation of an appropriate and accessible social security, improve Laborer's rights, protect the socially vulnerable, decrease crime and suicide, and invigorate civil society in their respective countries, as well as contribute to the harmonious coexistence within the Asia and Oceania region.

Duration: December 9th to 19th, 2008 (11 days)
Place: Tokyo, Kanagawa Pref., etc

<Key Words>
- Social Inclusion
- Social Exclusion
- Equal Opportunity
- Civil Society
- Empowerment
- Unemployment and Poverty of Youths (nationals and migrants)
- Working Poor (regular and non-regular employment)
- Single parents, Elderly, Mentally and Physically Disabled
- Safety Net (Employment, Social Insurance, Public Assistance, Family and Friends)
- Immobilized Income Disparity, Cycles of Poverty
- Globalization and Neoliberalism, Market Fundamentalism
- Homeless, Rough Sleepers
<Expected Participants>

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<td>Social Entrepreneurs, Private Sector (HR or CSR managers), Labor Unions</td>
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<td>NGO/NPO:</td>
<td>NGO's assisting Laborers, Youths, Homeless, Single Parents, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medical Care / Education / Social Welfare:</td>
<td>Education Institutes that provide education for children from needy families or to adults who require re-education due to missed opportunities, Medical Institutes that provide medical care to the poor, Social Workers</td>
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<td>Media or Academia:</td>
<td>Journalist, Researchers, Economists</td>
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<Requirements for the Participants>

Candidates for this programme will need to meet the following criteria:

- Be 35 years or under as of December 1, 2008, and currently engaged in with intentions to continue to play a leading role in such fields as academics, politics, government services, business, journalism, and NGOs
- Nationality in one of the following countries (currently residing within the country is desirable): ASEAN (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam), Australia, China, India, Republic of Korea, New Zealand (15 countries in total)
- Fluency in English to make presentations about his/her occupational experiences and opinions on the theme of the programme
- Utilize the knowledge and network gained from this programme for their career and future activities

<Obligation of the Participants>

- Submit the following to the Japan Foundation by the designated time.
  1. Write an essay (maximum: two A4-size pages) on their motives to participate, with reference to their specialty and occupation.
  2. Prepare and give a short presentation on the first day of the programme, which will introduce the participant's career background related to the topic and on the current situation of their country. (Country Report, 10 minutes each. Details will be sent out once the participation is confirmed.)
- Give a group presentation and write a group paper regarding the findings at the end of the programme. (The volume, deadline and theme will be indicated during the programme.)
- Actively participate in the entire programme as a member of a team.
- Cooperate in answering questionnaires, completion report and follow up programmes, etc that the Japan Foundation may ask for after the programme.
Participants

Australia

**Waleed ALY**
Lecturer, School of Political and Social Inquiry, Monash University

**Alaina Jay de VRIES**
Section Manager, Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Service & Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA)

Brunei

**Haji Mohammad Sofian Bin Haji AMIT**
Worker Grade 1, Youth and Sports Department, Ministry of Culture

Cambodia

**Chhim CHHUN**
Research Assistant, Cambodia Development Resource Institute (CDRI)

China

**Jing LI**
Strategic Planning Advisor, Beijing Normal University

India

**Minati SINHA**
Research Officer, Rehabilitation Council of India / Ph.D Candidate, Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi

Indonesia

**Ahmad SHOBIRIN, M. SI**
Head of Sub Division of Non-Government Organization Cooperation, Planning Bureau, Ministry of Social Affairs

**Arde WISBEN**
Social Worker, Social Worker Practice Resource Center

Japan

**Kensuke MATSUEDA**
Junior Program Officer, Foundation for Advanced Studies on International Development (FASID)

Korea (Republic of Korea)

**Sun Young KIM**
Staff, Youth Concern Team, Work Together Foundation

Laos

**Souvannamethy VANXAY**
Deputy Director, State Authority of Social Security

Malaysia

**Wan Teng LAI**
Lecturer, Women’s Development Research Center, University Sains Malaysia

**Latheefa Beebi KOYA**
Human rights lawyer, activist, politician and local councilor
Participants

Myanmar
  Myo Tha HTET
  Deputy Chief Editor, 7 Day News Journal

New Zealand
  Caleb STARRENBURG
  Freelance Journalist, Communications Consultant

Philippines
  Mark Lawrence B. CRUZ
  National Coordinator, Gawad Kalinga
  Sandra Puliran GANI, RSW
  Senior Community Organizer, Community and Family Services International

Singapore
  Norhayati Binte Mohammad ALI
  Programme Manager, Yayasan Mendaki Foundation

Thailand
  Chawanad LUANSANG
  Founder and Director, Openspace Community Architects / Guest Lecturer, Faculty of Architecture, Department of Local Architecture, Silpakorn University

Vietnam
  Dang Huong GIANG
  Director, Action for the City

The Japan Foundation

Tadashi OGAWA
Managing Director, Japanese Studies and Intellectual Exchange Dept.

Satoshi HASEGAWA
Director, Asia and Oceania Div., Japanese Studies and Intellectual Exchange Dept.

Mika MUKAI
Program Coordinator for JENESYS Programme, Asia and Oceania Div., Japanese Studies and Intellectual Exchange Dept.

Mariko MUGITANI
Chief Officer, Asia and Oceania Div., Japanese Studies and Intellectual Exchange Dept.

Yojiro TANAKA
Senior Officer, Asia and Oceania Div., Japanese Studies and Intellectual Exchange Dept.
# Programme Schedule

## Day 1  ▪ December 9, 2008 (Tuesday)

**Arrival in Japan**
19:30 - 21:30 Welcome Dinner  

*Stay in Tokyo*

## Day 2  ▪ December 10, 2008 (Wednesday)

9:00 - 9:30 Orientation
9:30 - 11:30 Introductory Lecture and Discussions with Advisor  
Dr. Aya K. ABE, Senior Researcher at the National Institute of Population and Society Security Research
11:30 - 12:30 Country Report from the Participants
14:00 - 18:00 Country Report from the Participants (continued)
19:00 - 21:00 Welcome Reception

*Stay in Tokyo*

## Day 3  ▪ December 11, 2008 (Thursday)

10:00 - 12:00 Visit to NPO "Moyai": Independent Life Support Center  
"Moyai" provides assistance and a place to "be" to the homeless and those in poverty to access housing and social welfare
14:00 - 16:00 Visit to the Japanese Trade Union Confederation, Department of Non-Regular Employment

*Stay in Tokyo*

## Day 4  ▪ December 12, 2008 (Friday)

9:00 - 10:50 Visit Yokohama Youth Support Station and Yokohama City  
Yokohama City officials and the Yokohama Youth Support Station introduce their policy and activities for the social inclusion of youths
12:50-17:00 Visit Kotobuki Supporters Exchange Association  
"Kotobuki-cho" One of the skid row/doss house area in Japan.
Evening Field Trip to the Shikoku island (Dec. 12-15), Leave Tokyo for Matsuyama

*Stay in Matsuyama*

## Day 5  ▪ December 13, 2008 (Saturday)

9:10 - 10:30 Visit to Matsuyama Castle
10:30 - 12:00 Browse the Dogo Hot Spring Bath House Area
15:30 - 17:00 Visit to Konpira Shrine (Kotohira, Kagawa)

*Stay in Kotohira*

## Day 6  ▪ December 14, 2008 (Sunday)

11:30 - 12:00 Visit to Katsurahama Beach (Kochi)
12:20 - 13:00 Visit to Sunday Market in Kochi City
14:40 - 15:50 Visit to Ryugado Stalactite Cave (Kami, Kochi)

*Stay in Umaji Village*
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<td>9:00 Visit to Umaji Village Office</td>
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<td>Visit to the Forestry Sector</td>
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<tr>
<td>Experience traditional crafts</td>
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<tr>
<td>until 15:00 Visit to the Agriculture Sector</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evening Leave Umaji Village for Tokyo</td>
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Day 8 ■ December 16, 2008 (Tuesday)

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<tr>
<td>9:30 - 11:00</td>
<td>Visit to NPO “Kamonohasi Project”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>* A Social Enterprise that creates income from web making and creating jobs for the poor to prevent human trafficking of children in Cambodia</td>
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<tr>
<td>13:00 - 15:00</td>
<td>Visit to “Second Harvest”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Food Bank. Redistributing food from companies and restaurants to household, institutes and the homeless</td>
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<tr>
<td>15:30 - 17:30</td>
<td>Wrap up and Brain Storming for the Group Presentation with Comments from the Advisor</td>
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<td>17:30 - 21:00</td>
<td>Group Activities (Preparing for the Group Presentation)</td>
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Day 9 ■ December 17, 2008 (Wednesday)

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<td>Individual Research</td>
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Day 10 ■ December 18, 2008 (Thursday)

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<td>9:30 - 13:00</td>
<td>Group Presentation</td>
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<td>15:00 - 15:30</td>
<td>Courtesy Call to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs</td>
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<td>16:00 - 18:00</td>
<td>Visit to the Japan Foundation and Evaluation</td>
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Day 11 ■ December 19, 2008 (Friday)

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<td>Departure from Japan</td>
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Objectives

Introductory lecture and Discussions with Advisor
Lecturer/Advisor: Dr. Aya K. ABE
Objective:
• To know the basics of the social security and welfare of Japan.
• To understand why poverty is now being "rediscovered" in Japan.

Country Report from the Participants
Objective:
• To understand the status quo of poverty and social welfare of the participating countries. What is similar and what is different.
• To see how the participants work relates to the services provided by the government or how their work fills the holes and gaps of it.
• To learn about the good/bad policy of the government and the good practices of the civil society in their respective countries.

NPO Independent Life Support Center: Moyai
Lecturer: Ms. Kaori YAMAGUCHI & Mr. Makoto YUASA
Objective:
• Gender and Poverty. To understand the connection between gender and poverty, especially on women who suffered from domestic violence (DV) and the care and support that are needed but currently unavailable in Japan.
• To learn about Moyai’s activities providing housing and a place to belong, so that those they have supported do not become socially excluded.
• Anti-Poverty Movement. Mr. Yuasa is a leading activist in Japan fighting poverty through advocacy and consolidating the NPOs and the poor themselves to stand up for policy change.

Japan Trade Union Confederation, Department of Non-Regular Employment
Lecturer: Mr. Yoji TATSUI
Objective:
• To understand how the labour union in Japan progressed to win the rights of labourers in Japan. (Minimum wage, unemployment insurance, work injury insurance, etc)
• How globalization has changed the company structure and labour market in Japan.
• The growing disparity between regular and atypical employee in Japan, and what needs to be done about it.

Yokohama Youth Support Station and Yokohama City Office
Lecturer: Ms. Yumi TOTSUKA (Yokohama Youth Support Station)
            Mr. Yosiyuki SEKIGUCHI (City of Yokohama)
Objective:
• To learn about the collaboration between local government and NPO to combat unemployment and youth issues.
• To understand the current situation of youths and why Yokohama city is trying to resolve it, and the actual policy it has taken.
• To hear from on-the-spot NPO that is implementing the policy and understanding the actual situation and issues from their perspective.
Objectives

**Kotobuki Supporters Exchange Association**
Lecturer and Guide: Mr. Yukio TAKAZAWA
Objective:
- To see and observe the skid row /doss house area of Japan and the kind of support that are available.
- To learn about the state of children of Japanese and foreign residents living in this area.
- To talk and exchange ideas with the homeless and those living on welfare in Japan.

**Umaji-Mura (Umaji Village) in Kochi Prefecture**
Organizer: Umaji Village Mayor and Village Office
Objective:
- To understand how a depopulating village became successful in utilizing the resources that they have in order to make a sustainable development.
- To learn how the village utilizes its brand name to create different products and attract tourists to the village.
- To learn and experience the Japanese culture and nature in the rural area.

**NPO Kamonohashi Project**
Lecturer: Mr. Kunihiko KABE
Objective:
- To learn about the good business model that they have created in the IT project, community factory project and supporters project.
- To understand the problems and benefits of starting a social enterprise in Japan and Cambodia.
Note: This is a social enterprise that has been created by Japanese youths in their 20's to provide training and jobs for the poor in Cambodia to prevent child prostitution and human trafficking.

**Second Harvest**
Lecturer: Mr. Charles E. McJilton
Objective:
- To learn how corporations and NPO's can join together in a win-win situation, which can stop food going to waste and allow it to be redistributed to the community.
- To understand what kind of people are in need of food in Japan.
- To learn why the NPO sector is under-developed in Japan.
Note: Although most of the staffs and volunteers are now Japanese, it is a good example of how foreign residents can also be an active player in the civil society of which they live in.

**Group Presentation**
Objective:
- To wrap up on the things learnt in Japan and from the other participants to discuss and contemplate the “ideal” role that the government, local government, NPO, media and the social vulnerable themselves can do to combat poverty and social exclusion.
- To facilitate discussions and build network through the group work.

**Japan Foundation**
Objective:
- To understand the activities of the Japan Foundation.
- Introduction to possible follow-up activities through the Japan Foundation Grants, etc.
- Overall evaluation and exchange of ideas to make a better programme.
Profile of Lecturers

Kaori YAMAGUCHI
Staff of NPO “Moyai”—Independent Life Support Center.

She became a victim of domestic violence (DV) in 2002 and was rescued by Moyai when she was unable to find a tenancy guarantor. She started working as a volunteer from 2005, and became a temporary staff in 2006. Established the “Green Necklace” women’s support framework within Moyai based on her own experiences. It mainly provides a place where women can gather together and communicate, and visits those who can not come to the gathering at their homes.

Makoto YUASA
Chief of Secretariat of NPO “Moyai”—Independent Life Support Center, and Anti-Poverty Network, etc.

Has been working with the homeless since the 1990s. He addresses and appeals to the public on poverty issues facing the modern day Japan from an on-site perspective. He has been one of the first to bring to public attention the “Net Café refugees” issue before it became a major social concern, and is now also blowing the whistle on “Poverty Businesses” that try to take advantage of the poor.

His writings include books – “Han-hinkon (Anti-poverty)” (Iwanami Shinsho, April 2008), “Hinkon Shurai (Poverty Onslaught)” (Yamabuki Shoten, 2007), and “Welfare Benefits Application Manual for the Needy” (Dobunkan Shuppan, 2005) – and numerous articles for magazines, such as “Sekai”, “Ronza” and “Toyo Keizai”, etc. He appears on the media that highlights the working poor and poverty/disparity issues for advocacy. Currently focusing on establishing an anti-poverty network.

Born in 1969. After finishing all the courses, he left the Graduate School of Law and Politics, University of Tokyo before earning his doctorate.

Yoji TATSUI
Executive Director, Department of Non-Regular Employment, Japanese Trade Union Confederation

Born in Tokyo in 1949. During 1979 to 1989, he worked for General Council of Trade Unions of Japan (known as Sohyo) as an editor for “Sohyo Labour News” and “Sohyo Newspaper”. He joined the Japanese Trade Union Confederation in 1989 and was involved in labour consultations as part of the small and medium enterprises labour measure. After holding successive positions as Head of the General Labour Department and Head of the General Policy Department, was appointed Executive Director of the Department of Non-regular Employment.

Joint author of “Support Guidebook for Working Women: Resolving workplace issues (Problem Q&A)” (Ryokufu Shupan, 1996) and “Guidebook for Countermeasures against Dismissal and Resignation: What to do if you lose your job – voluntarily or forced (Problem Q&A)” (Ryokufu Shupan, 2004), etc. both with Mr. Masaomi Kaneko.
Profile of Lecturers

Yumi TOTSUKA
Board Member of NPO YouthPort Yokohama Executive Director / Industrial Counsellor, Yokohama Youth Support Station

After working in the marketing department of a private (promotion-related) company, she started to work on youth related issues from 2006. Initially, she planned to provide general job assistance support, but came across innumerable problematic cases involving issues such as mental disorder, developmental disabilities, economic hardship, abuse, and bullying at work, whereupon she decided to operate a job assistance institution aimed at providing comprehensive support that would cover the aforementioned issues. She is currently working to establish a Japanese style career ladder (new intermediate support organization) in the job assistance field.

Yosiyuki SEKIGUCHI
Head of Section, Youth Development Division, Child & Youth Department, City of Yokohama

Joined the City of Yokohama's local government in 1988. Edited information journal on political measures of Yokohama City and a White Paper on Yokohama civic life issued by the City of Yokohama. From 2002, involved in drafting policy for the Urban Management Department, and conducted studies on comprehensive urban policy of a depopulating municipality. Transferred to the Planning and Coordination Division in 2006 when the Child & Youth Department was established. Contributed to drafting policy for children and youths in the city of Yokohama, mainly to establish measures to support self-reliance amongst the unemployed youths, including so-called NEET (not in employment, education or training) and stay-at-home recluses. Currently works in the Youth Development Division, promoting policies and projects for self-reliance and sound development of youths from an across-the-department perspective.

Yukio TAKAZAWA
Chief of the secretariat for Kotobuki Shiensha Koryukai (Kotobuki Supporters Exchange Association) and Vice president of NPO “Kizuna” – Shonan Life Support

Has been involved in summer festivals and make-it-through-winter activities since 1990 in the Kotobuki-cho area of Yokohama, one of the largest conglomerations of day workers in Japan. On December 28, 1992, he witnessed a JR station staff assaulting a rough sleeper at Yokohama station. This proved to be a catalytic event leading to his establishment of the Kotobuki Supporters Exchange Association / Yokohama Wednesday Patrol Group in January 1993 as a loose network to link Kotobuki and civil society, and their activities continue to this day. The Kotobuki Supporters Exchange Association focuses on listening to the personal history of those sleeping rough as well as holding exchange workshops to learn about the background to homelessness and irregular labour.

He worked to receive local government cooperation, established “Kizuna Consultation Center” as a project in collaboration with Kanagawa prefecture and the “Kizuna” NPO Shonan Life Support, which he now heads. The aim is to run a consultation center where the people in need can casually come and visit. In addition, he holds free legal consultation services, offers housing support, and has been entrusted and in charge of researching the homeless' working needs, etc.

He is the Chairman of the Council for Kanagawa Volunteer Support Center, a support facility for citizen activities run by Kanagawa Prefectural Government from May 2008. (Deputy vice chairman: January 2006 – March 2007) He also servers as a member of government committees such as the Committee for Drafting a Self-reliance Support Plan for the Homeless of Kanagawa Prefecture, and the Yokohama City's Committee Promotion Council for Patrolling and Consultation Service, etc.
Kunihiko KABE
Staff, Fund Raising Department, NPO Kamonohashi Project and Lecturer at Meiji Gakuin University “International Cooperation” Course

He worked as a public servant of California, USA as a staff of CalWORKs Program, providing training to single mothers on social welfare. He became the Country Representative of the Kamonohashi office in Cambodia from October 2005 and worked with the Cambodian government, Japan Embassy, international organizations and the Cambodian citizens to develop strategies for their anti-human trafficking project and the community factory project. The goal of these projects was to decrease the vulnerability of the children. He is currently working in the Tokyo office, gathering support through advocacy, giving lectures and presentations on the current situation and social problems in Cambodia and the fate of the children at companies and universities to solve human trafficking and CSEC problems in Cambodia.

Charles McJILTON
CEO and the executive director of Second Harvest Japan.

This nonprofit corporation is the first of its kind in Japan and McJilton has been the driving force in pioneering food banking in Japan.

McJilton began his involvement with the Japanese day-labor movement in 1991 when he lived in Sanya (a section of town where day-laborers live and look for work). He spent 15 months (Jan 97 – Apr 98) living with the homeless along the Sumida River. In January 2000 he participated in the first meeting to discuss developing a food bank to serve groups in Sanya providing hot meals. He was appointed co-representative of the coalition named, Food Bank Japan. In 2002 he had a broader vision to create a food banking system supporting anyone in need in Japan and incorporated the organization under the name “Food Boat/NPO FOOD BANK JAPAN.” In 2004 the name was changed Second Harvest Japan.

McJilton is responsible for the development of food banking, fundraising, day-to-day operations, and outreach to donor companies. In addition, he is often seen making long-haul runs to Nagoya, Kansai, and Kyushu. As a member of the Global FoodBanking Network, McJilton has traveled many times to the Philippines to assist in their efforts to establish a food banking system.
Welcome desk at the hotel

Welcome reception

Lecture by Mr. Makoto Yuasa of the NPO Moyai-Independent Life Support Center

NPO Moyai office building

Lecture by Mr. Yoji Tatsui, Executive Director, Department of Non-regular employment of RENGO

Group Photo at the Japanese Trade Union Confederation (RENGO)
Ms. Yumi Totsuka, the Yokohama Youth Support Station (second from left) and Mr. Yoshiyuki Sekiguchi, the City of Yokohama

Listening and taking notes at the Yokohama Youth Support Station

Helping out at the soup kitchen in Kotobukicho

More than 600 servings were distributed in less than one hour

Distributing pickles with the porridge

Handing out chopsticks

More than 600 servings were distributed in less than one hour
Collecting chopsticks and bowls to be washed and reused

Visit Kotobuki Gakudo (Afterschool Children's Center)

Discussions with the homeless and those on public assistance

A typical room at a dorm house. The space is only about 8 square meters. The toilet and kitchen are shared on each floor. Once it was a day to day accommodation for day hire workers, but now most of the residents pay monthly rent and are on public assistance.

Walking to Matsuyama Castle

At Matsuyama Castle
Dougo Hot Springs

Konpira Shrine

Japanese style dinner

Wearing Yukata

Katsurahama Beach

Ryugado Stalactite Cave
Dinner with the Mayor and people of Umaji Village

The Mayor of Umaji Village, Mr. Takashi Kamiji welcoming the delegation

Before the map of Umaji Village

Welcome Singboard at the yuzu juice factory. The signboard, map, products and even the village officials business cards all use the same design/logo to promote the brand image of the village.

Making traditional wooden lunch boxes

Lecture at the Umaji Village Office
Mr. Charles McJilton giving a lecture about poverty and food bank in Japan

Visiting the warehouse of Second Harvest

Mr. Kabe giving a lecture at NPO Kamonohashi Project

At NPO Kamonohashi Project. The products on the shelf in the back is produced in a village in Cambodia where they work together with the villagers for sustainable income.

State of the art factory at the Umaji Village Agricultural Cooperative

Packaging and shipping section of the factory
The Programme Advisor, Dr. Abe giving her evaluation and comments on the group presentation
A participant making a speech at MOFA on behalf of the delegation

Evaluation at the Japan Foundation

Completion Ceremony - end of all official programs

Coutresy Call with Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Nobuhide Minorikawa

The participants taking leadership after the official schedule
Profile of Programme Advisor

Aya K. ABE
Senior Researcher, National Institute of Population and Social Security Research

Education;
Bachelor of Science (BS) Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
Master of Arts in Law and Diplomacy (MALD) and Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D) from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University.

Professional Background;
1995-1998 Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (Japan)
1999- present position

Awards:

Articles in English (selected):

Books in Japanese (Selected):
1. The Objective of the Program
The objective of the program was to introduce the participants to poverty reduction and social inclusion programs and movements in various East Asian countries and to exchange new ideas in achieving the goal of social inclusion. The program assembled 20 participants from Australia, Brunei, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. I was fortunate to act as an advisor to the program. It is enough to say that the countries that the participants represent are quite varied in terms of their economic status, social structure, political regime, and development of social protection programs. Japan, along with Australia and New Zealand, is one of the most “developed” countries in East Asia in terms of GDP per capita and has developed quite extensive social security systems including public pension, public health insurance, public assistance and various social services. Yet, Japan can benefit much from experiences of other Asian countries precisely because it has enjoyed the fruits of economic development for nearly a half century without much worry about poverty within the nation. It is a nation which prided itself with the notion of achieving economic success without worsening income inequality. The term “All middle class Nation” has been used to describe Japan and until just recently this perception of Japan was shared by the general public, policy makers, and politicians, alike. However, since the 1990s, it is becoming increasingly clear that such perception of “Japan as an Equal Society” is nothing but a myth. As it will be described in more detail in the next section, Japan’s inequality has been rising since the 1970s and its poverty rate now stands the second highest among the OECD-19 countries (excluding Turkey and Mexico), only next to the US.

Perhaps because that this myth of “Japan as an Equal Society” has sunk into people’s consciousness so deeply, there has been very little awareness of poverty as a social issue. The government has stopped measuring statistics on poverty in the 1960s, and even to this day, there is no official statistics on poverty. The public has also been unaware of “poverty”, since the emerging poor are often “invisible”, i.e. they may be experiencing sub-standard living, but they are hidden in their apartments. Only occasional newspaper articles such as the one citing an old lady was found starved to death in an old apartment, was the only “visible” sign of poverty. Low awareness also means that there has been virtually no people’s movement against poverty and economic inequality.

The concept of the social inclusion/exclusion is also fairly new to Japan. Even though Japanese population includes some minorities, such as the “Hisabetsu” groups, the Ainu, Chinese and Korean descendents, it is fairly uniform compared to most of the Asian and other countries whose population includes large minority groups. Thus, besides the fairly small minority groups mentioned above, social segregation of a portion of the population was never considered to be a social issue.

In comparison, many of the Asian countries have long history of poverty alleviation and social inclusion both as the governmental policy and as the people’s movements. Even though economic conditions might be worse and resources scant, these countries possess social power and know-how of poverty alleviation at the grass roots. The participants of this program have brought with them wealth of knowledge and experiences from various countries and from various positions, such as governmental officers implementing public programs for the poor, NGO activists, journalists, and researchers. During 10 days when they have learned and observed about Japan’s situation of poverty and social exclusion, they have given me a new perspective and insight into Japan. The program was an eye-opening 10 days for me.

In this report, I will first outline the social policy and the poverty and inequality in Japan. Then, I will highlight some insightful comments and observations by each of the 5 group reports that the participants presented at the end of the program. The final section will provide some of my impressions of the program.
2. **Overview of Poverty and Social Exclusion in Japan**

The fundamental design of Japanese social policy is universal social insurance schemes supplemented by fairly small social assistance and welfare programs. The four social insurance programs are: Pension (retirement, disability and survivors), Health, Unemployment and Long-term Care. The public pension and the public health insurance systems take up the bulk of the social security expenditure, which amount to nearly 24% of national income.

Even though the amount of national pension was not enough to cover the entire living cost of the elderly, it was expected to reduce much of poverty which was mainly considered to be the elderly problem. As stressed in the last section, the poverty and inequality did not surface on a political agenda during the entire 1970s to 1980s, helped by two-digit growth of Japanese economy and rapidly rising living standards of people. It is during this period that the public shared “100 million all middle-class” view (100 million was the population of Japan at the time) (Tominaga 1979). Consequently, the social programs became more universal, so “the middle-classification” of the social system progressed (Hoshino 2000). The effectiveness of social policy in fighting poverty and inequality was never questioned, and poverty “forgotten” (Iwata 2007).

In the middle of 1990s, with the burst of the bubble economy, the income inequality became a social issue. The Gini coefficient was said to be increasing rapidly during the 1990s and into the 2000s (Figure 1). The official statistics, one by the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, shows that the Gini coefficient increased from 0.314 in 1980 to 0.3812 in 2001. This is quite a big increase, making Japan one of the most “unequal” countries next to the U.S. among the OECD countries. The poverty has also become an issue, a little later in the 2000s. Table 1 shows the poverty rate for Japan during the 1990s to early 2000s. The poverty rate has been increasing during the period, especially for children and working-age population.

However, social security systems and tax systems in Japan is not as effective as in other countries in reducing inequality and especially, poverty. This is because Japanese social security system is based on mostly social insurance programs. More than 70% of social security expenditure goes to the elderly population. Thus most of transfer is inter-generational, i.e. it occurs from the working-age population to elderly population, and not from the rich to the poor. Also, benefits through social insurance schemes are not necessary progressive. The benefits are given on the basis of prior contributions (in terms of premiums) and not on the basis of “need”. Thus, poor individuals who have not contributed much do not receive as much benefits as rich individuals (e.g. pension benefits. Health service benefit is supposedly the same). Such “need” base benefits are given in the form of limited means-tested benefits such as the Public Assistance and the Child Rearing Allowance, but their benefit level is set at the minimum.

In order to demonstrate Japanese social security

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1 Poverty Rate by Age Group: 1984-2002</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population Share (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elderly (+60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working age (20-59)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children (-20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty Rate (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elderly (+60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working age (20-59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children (-20)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Abe (2006)
Programme Advisor Report

system’s ineffectiveness of reducing poverty, let us turn to three figures showing pre-transfer and post-transfer poverty rates of some OECD countries (Table 2). Pre-transfer poverty rate refers to market-income poverty rate, before tax and social security premiums are levied and before the benefits such as pensions, child allowance, etc. are given. Post-transfer poverty rate refers to disposable income poverty rate, after tax and premiums are paid and benefits received. Table 2 shows that while Japanese social policy’s effectiveness in reducing poverty of elderly is fairly good (from 61.9% to 22.0%), that for working age is dismal (from 16.4% to 12.3%), and for children, it actually increases poverty rate (from 12.8% to 13.7%).

Why is the Japanese social security system left to be as ineffective as it is? Especially since the financial crisis followed by an economic crisis hit the world in late 2007, there has been much media coverage of poverty, especially those who have lost jobs and housing in recent months. However, the awareness of inequality and poverty as social issues has not spurred political commitment to mitigate them. There are several reasons for this. First, Japan’s fiscal position has been one of the worst among the OECD countries, and it is near impossible to allocate additional funds for inequality or poverty reduction programs. Just by the naturally occurring population ageing, the social outlays continue to rise, and the government has made it its top commitment to curve the natural increase (due to population ageing) of the outlay. The Prime Minister Koizumi, at the time, has repeatedly stressed the need to “reform with no sacred ground”, meaning that every aspect of social security should be reformed to cut the future burden. Second, there has been an academic controversy on the cause of the rise of inequality. Some researchers claimed that the rise in inequality is a natural consequence of population ageing and therefore is not a real “inequality”. Many politicians and bureaucrats jumped onto this debate, making it difficult to achieve a consensus that anything should be done about it.

Third and probably the biggest reason is that Japanese society, the politicians and the public alike, believed very strongly that Japan is an egalitarian society. It came as a big surprise to many people when organizations such as OECD pointed out that Japan’s poverty rate was not that low. It is because of this lack of awareness which is the main cause that there has not been much social discussion in reforming the social protection system.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Children (0-17)</th>
<th>Working Age (18-65)</th>
<th>Elderly (65+)</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>27.0%</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>24.9%</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>27.4%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
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<td>Poland</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>28.8%</td>
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<td>Portugal</td>
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<td>Slovak Rep.</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
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<td>15.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>25.1%</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>27.4%</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Outcome and Implications for Japan

At the end of the JENESYS program, the participants were divided into five groups according to their affiliation; Government, NGO1, NGO2, Media, and Researchers. Then, each group was asked to write a short report on the topic of what each sector (government, NGO community, journalists, and researchers) can do to fight against poverty and social exclusion. I have specifically asked them to be innovative in their approach and thinking. The 5 group reports are included in the program report. Some points particularly eye-opening are summarized below.

1) Observations about the Government policy and programs

From the Government Group (Souvannamethy Vanxay (Laos), Ahmad Shobirin (Indonesia), Alaina Jay de Vries (Australia) and Haji Mohammad Sofian Bin Haji Amit (Brunei)), 7 guiding principles for the government in overcoming poverty were spelled out. I do not go into details here since they will be explained in detail in their individual report, but let me point out a couple of points particularly relevant in the Japanese context. In the first guiding principle, the group stressed the need for “Sound Governance” for which “continual evaluation” was necessary. This is a point that Japanese government still needs to work on. The performance of past policies, as well as their effectiveness in rapidly changing situations in today’s global economy needs to be continually evaluated using evidence-based policy evaluation tools. Since the 1960s, Japanese government has failed to evaluate the effect of its policy on poverty under the assumption that the development of social security system such as the public pension, and public health insurance, together with the economic growth, would eliminate poverty. However, it is apparent from statistics given in the previous section as well as observations from various site visits such as Kotobuki-cho and Moyai, that this assumption no longer holds true.

It is also interesting to note that the government group listed “Support conditions favorable to Economic development” as one of the guiding principles. It is easy to forget this point from Japan’s perspective, but it should not be forgotten that Japan’s economic success in the 1970s to 2000s, has contributed much in alleviating poverty and to some extent social exclusion (e.g. day-laborers were able to find work at least to have subsistent living).

2) Observations about Japanese NPOs

There are two NGO groups. The first group (Sandra Gani (Philippines), Arde Wisben (Indonesia) and Dang Huang Giang (Vietnam)) made very critical observations about Japanese NPOs. Their first observation was that “many Japanese NPOs provide practical and short-term interventions such as giving hot meals, providing shelter, providing after-schools programs for children whose parents have to work, etc. Very few NPOs work to address root causes of poverty.” In my view, this is the most critical short-coming of NPOs in Japan. Even I, who has been conducting poverty research in Japan for the past decade, can count only a handful of NPOs which are engaged in the advocacy activities. Many NPOs, even though their effort is commanding and often self-sacrificing, are content in “giving” and if I may say so without the fear of sounding too harsh, self-satisfying. Moyai is one of the only few NPOs which are trying to create the public awareness and political movement against poverty. Yet, even by Moyai, the political movement is still at an infantile stage. The comment by Mr.Yuasa, the head of Moyai, that his life-long ambition was to fill the Ginza Street full of demonstrators and he envies many Asian countries in which political movements against poverty is a massive scale, is a demonstrative of this point.

Another critical observation made by the group is that “many NPOs are not community-based”. It is also true that even at Kotobuki-Cho, which by the group’s assessment is the most “community-based” among 5 NPOs that we visited, many individuals who are involved in the activities come from outside the community (for example, college students who are interested to learn about “social issues”). Japanese NPOs need to devise a way to create a social movement rising from the community themselves.

The second NGO Group (Nad Luansang (Thailand), Norhayati Binte Mohammad Ali (Singapore), Sun Young Kim (Korea) and Mark Lawrence B. Cruz (Philippines)) has made interesting observations about Japanese life, society and culture itself. Of all the points that the group mentioned, the most striking to me was that they thought Japanese people are “too dependent on government support” and “hinders the affected to achieve own self-reliance”. This needs a little explanation. In Japan, the poor themselves are most self-reliant, meaning that they do not seek government or any other assistance from others. This is the reason that many homeless people refuse to receive the Public Assistance. However, when it comes to NPO activities, most of NPOs tend to rely on government assistance (Public Assistance, etc.) in helping the poor and they act as a “bridge” between the poor and the government or a “spokesperson” on behalf of the poor. These kinds of activities do not motivate the poor themselves to be empowered.
The second group has also pointed out that the poverty problem(s) in Japan “are within solvable means” of Japan. This is quite correct observation coming from countries such as Thailand and Phillipines where the economic situation is much worse and the magnitude of the problem much bigger. The group believes there is a real opportunity to build Japanese civil society if public awareness is heightened. They recommend the use of “Fun, Cool and Aspiring approach” through unconventional means including TV reality shows.

3) Observations about Media
The Media group (Myo Tha Htet (Myannmer), Latheefa Beebi Koya (Malaysia), Kensuke Matsueda (Japan), and Caleb Starrenburg (New Zealand)) suggested creating “the People's Ombudsman”, a broad coalition representing various stakeholders to lobby and advocate for the eradication of poverty. As also pointed out by the NPO group 1, they see that the advocacy activities in Japan must be strengthened to move the government as well as the people. Their idea of People's Ombudsman includes NPOs (both rights-based and service based), unions, media, lawyers, medical practitioners, academicians, student/youth groups and artists. Their observation is quite correct and I am happy to report that such movement has started in late fall 2008. A few groups of academicians, lawyers and NPO activists, in particular, are now formed to form a uniform front in advocating poverty issues. The largest of which is Han Hinkon (Anti-Poverty) Network. An advocacy group for child poverty is now forming as well. They are still small movements, but are starting points to becoming the People's Ombudsman in future.

4) Observations about Research Community
The last group is the Academics and Researchers Group (Li Jing (China), Chhim Chhun (Cambodia), Minati Sinha (India), Lai Wan Teng (Malaysia), Waleed Aly (Australia)). As with other groups, they have observed that in Japan, there is low awareness of poverty, small NPO sector in contrast with other developed countries, and that poverty is fragmented. Then the group proposes for “Action Research”: Their “Action Research” utilizes private sector as well as the government, and it is a new concept for Japan where most of research funds come from the government. They have also pointed out the importance of international linkages. Most of Japanese academicians are not good at disseminating information about what is happening in Japan both in terms of government policy and also in research. Their connection to the international community of researchers is often one-way, i.e. they only receive information from others. While information gathering is important, the one-way communication does not foster real debate and collaboration. In this respect, I hope the relations fostered by this JENESYS program will continue.

4. Conclusion
When the Japan Foundation first informed me of this program, I was weary of its effectiveness. The poverty and social exclusion are deeply rooted in each country's culture and the society. Also the economic status and the state of various social protection schemes are vastly different from a country to another. Another concern was that the poverty alleviation and social inclusion efforts, either by the government or the private sector, have not been active in Japan. I did not think the participants would learn much from Japan. However, I must say that my worries were not founded. It was encouraging to see the participants debate lively, using Japan as an example, and bringing knowledge and experiences from their own countries. I have gained new perspective on poverty and social exclusion in Japan, and I am sure that the participants also have something new to bring back home.

The fight against the poverty has just begun in Japan. In this respect, the timing of this JENESYS program could not be timelier. It is now my duty, not as an advisor to the program, but as a fellow fighter against the poverty, to convey the observations and suggestions by the participants of the program to Japanese government, NPO sector, media and the research community.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1 Exception to this is organizations for welfare of disabled persons.
How is Poverty defined?

- Even though many countries do define "poverty", there is no official "poverty line" per se in Japan.
- There are many "poverty" definitions used in the poverty research (especially in industrialized countries):
  - Uni-Dimensional vs. Multi-Dimensional
  - Absolute vs. Relative
  - Static vs. Dynamic
- New terms now in use, e.g.:
  - (Relative) Deprivation
  - Social Exclusion

Relative Income Poverty
(often used in OECD for comparison of poverty among the industrialized countries)

50% of Median of Household Equivalized Income

As Compared to Other Industrialized Countries?

Poverty Rates of Elderly (above 65)
The important thing is, whatever the definition of poverty is, to use it to monitor economic well-being of the population, to evaluate policy impact, & to identify who is the most vulnerable.

However, in Japan, poverty reduction has not been on the policy agenda for several decades. Why?

- Widely accepted belief that 1) Japan is an egalitarian society,
- 2) that Japan achieved economic growth without worsening income disparity,
- 3) that social security system, which was rapidly built after the 1960s, solved most of the problem,
- 4) that people are “poor” only when they are starving, or has no shelter, so on (in another words “absolute poverty”).

It is only in the past few years that Japan “discovered” that the poverty rate has increased significantly since the 1980s.

World History of Welfare States
- 1601 Poor Law by Queen Elizabeth (England): Beginning of welfare states
- 1880’s Century Introduction of Social Insurances by Bismarck (Germany)
- “Social Security” = 1st used in 1935 Social Security Law in the US
Characteristics of Japanese Social Security System

1. Universal Social Insurances
   - Public Pension
   - Public Health Insurance
   - Employment Insurance
   - Work Accident Insurance
   - Long-term Care Insurance
2. Covers (virtually) the entire population, including housewives and dependents (in case of health insurance)

All persons (above certain age) MUST participate in the social insurance
- Two Major kinds: 1) for employees, 2) for non-employees (farmers, self-employed, etc.)
- Insured persons pay “Premium” (tax) to the Insurer (Government), and in return, receive services and cash when they encounter a “risk” (e.g. old age, disability, sickness, care needs, etc.)
- Premium amount: 1) a fixed % of salary, matched by the employer, 2) a fixed amount.
- There usually is a premium deduction for the poor.

Functions of Social Insurance(s)
Social Insurance is a system to SHARE the impact of risk among the entire population. But if this is its only function, it can be done in the private market. By being PUBLIC, it:
- Forces all persons to prepare for a risk
- Encompass those who are, in the private market, unable to buy insurance policy
- Redistributes income from one sector of the population to another
- Forces employers to contribute as well.

Social Insurance vs. Social Assistance
- It is necessary to “contribute” in some way to be eligible to receive benefits
- People feel entitlement and participation
- It is easy to collect more revenue
- Universal in nature
- Contribution is not prerequisite of benefit
- Many feel reluctant or “shame” to receive benefits
- The budget allocation is always challenging
- Selective (Targeted) in nature

Public Pension System
- Public Pension
  - National Pension
  - Employee’s Pension
- Semi-Public Pension
  - National Pension Fund, Employee’s pension Fund
- Private Pensions
  - Corporate pension(s)
  - Private pensions

Public Health Insurance and Long-Term care Insurance
- Public Health Insurance
  - National Health Insurance
  - Employee’s Health Insurance
  - Late Elderly health Insurance
- Long-term care Insurance

Risk of Old Age (Old Age Pension)
Risk of Disability (Disability Pension)
Risk of Losing Bread-winner (Widow(er) pension)
Risk of Sickness
Risk of Long-term Care
slide 19

What is Public Assistance:
Safety Net, last Resort before becoming destitute

Public Social Insurances
(Public Pension, Health Insurance, Long-term Care, Employment)

Private Safety Net
(Savings, Family, Relatives, Friends, etc.)

Public Assistance

slide 20

Non-Insurance Based Social Security
(i.e. Paid out of general budget of gov’t)

- (Children) Child Allowance, Day-Care Centers
- (Lone Parent) Child Rearing Allowance
- (Disability) Disability payments, rehabilitation services, etc.
- (Elderly) elderly care homes, services
- (Poverty) Public Assistance System

slide 21

Characteristics of Public Assistance

1. After-the-fact intervention for those who have become destitute
   As opposed to social insurance, which is before-the-fact intervention
2. Financed out of Tax
3. Selective Targeting
   Strict means test, asset tests, and other hurdles to pass to qualify

slide 22

The Development of Japan’s social Security system

Social Security Expenditure by category, fiscal years 1970-2005

slide 23

Scope of Social Security System:
Social Security Expenditure by category as a % of National Income

- Nearly 1/4 of National Income is spent on Social Security
- The largest category is the pensions, followed by medical care.
- “Welfare and others” including Public Assistance uses about 4% of National Income
Programme Advisor Report

International comparison of social expenditures and visible and invisible tax and social contributions ratio to the National Income in FY 2003

- Yet, comparing to other industrialized countries, Japan’s social security system as a whole is not large. Both expenditure and contribution as % of GDP is low.

By policy area

- By policy area, Japan’s SS is notable for high ratio of “old age”.

Who are left out from the System?

(Left Out Most of the way)

- Homeless persons (estimated to be around 19 thousands in 2007).
- Illegal foreigners (and some legal foreigners) (Left out in some respects)
- Single women (widows, single-mothers, etc.)
- Part-time workers, non-permanent job holders

Key Concepts of Relative Deprivation

- Townsend(1979): “decent life”
- Today’s most popular definition of relative deprivation

“people are in poverty when “their resources are so seriously below those commanded by the average individual or family that they are, in effect, excluded from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities” (Townsend 1979).

How is Relative Deprivation measured?

- List items and activities which are cultural and societal “norm”
- Count items which cannot be afforded.
- It is a direct method to measure “standard of living”.
By Revenue source

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>Compared with the previous year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Millions of yen</td>
<td>Millions of yen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>947,962</td>
<td>1,176,220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II Social Insurance</td>
<td>6,997,543</td>
<td>667,961.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributions from employers</td>
<td>(25.9% )</td>
<td>2,283,383</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contributions from insured persons</td>
<td>(27.0% )</td>
<td>283,600</td>
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<tr>
<td>Taxes</td>
<td>268,693</td>
<td>300,945</td>
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<tr>
<td>Central government</td>
<td>217,012</td>
<td>230,321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other government</td>
<td>77,679</td>
<td>96,307</td>
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<tr>
<td>II Other receipts</td>
<td>160,440</td>
<td>227,300</td>
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<tr>
<td>Income from capital</td>
<td>70,036</td>
<td>138,685</td>
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<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>88,404</td>
<td>90,915</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- A little over ½ of revenue is social insurance contributions, and about 30%, tax revenue.

Deprivation Rates for Some Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item (a)</th>
<th>Haves (b)</th>
<th>Not enough (c)</th>
<th>Don’t own (d)</th>
<th>Don’t have (e)</th>
<th>Deprivation rate (f)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home</td>
<td>1,987</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>1,947</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>1,947</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>1,947</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>1,947</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>1,947</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>1,947</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Social Exclusion

- An accumulative process of depleting various resources which are necessary to participate in society fully (such as labor, housing, access to systems, social network, etc.) and in due course, of being excluded from the society
- Dynamic process
- Exclusion from Labor market – an emphasis
- Much more than “income” poverty
Group Presentation
Group Presentation Overview

1. Objectives
   • To wrap up on the things learnt in Japan and from the other participants and to discuss and contemplate the “ideal” role that the government, local government, NPO/NGO, media and the socially vulnerable themselves can do to combat poverty and social exclusion.
   • To facilitate discussions and build network through the group work.

2. Group Members
   In order to achieve the objectives, the participants were divided into 5 groups of 3-5 people. The members were selected according to their background and profession, into groups of government, media/advocacy, NPO/NGO and research/academia. Since there were many participants from the NPO/NGO field, they were divided into two groups.

3. Method
   Each group was given 30 minutes to present their papers, including Q&A from the floor. It was followed by a 40 minute overall discussion of all the presentations with evaluation and comments from Dr. Abe. Each Group prepared a power point and a 4-5 page paper for the group presentation.
   • December 10: A brief explanation on the objectives of the group presentation, and group members were announced during the orientation.
   • December 14: Mid-program discussion and instructions from the Advisor: During the field trip, the delegation gathered to organize their thoughts and clear any questions or doubts of what they have learnt so far. Dr. Abe gave clear instructions on the points that should be addressed in each presentation and asked the presentations to be “unique and inspiring.”
   • December 16: Group Work: Each group was provided with a laptop, printer and internet access to brainstorm and write up their group paper and power point. Dr. Abe went around each group for any last minute advice if needed.
   • December 17: Deadline for submitting each group’s presentation.
   • December 18: Group Presentation

4. Observations
   Please refer to the Programme Advisor report for the observations regarding the contents of the group presentation. As for the feedback from the participants, most gave very positive response and said that it “provided time and space to learn about each others insights and feel as part of a small team”, “involved the sharing of ideas from the perspective of often vastly different country perspectives in terms of levels of development and cultural aspects,” and “established a platform for us to create mutual understanding on related issues”, etc.
The Role of Government in Overcoming Poverty

Souvannamethy VANXAY (Laos)
Ahmad SHOBIRIN, M. SI (Indonesia)
Alaina Jay de VRIES (Australia)
Haji Mohammad Sofian Bin Haji AMIT (Brunei)

Protecting the wellbeing of citizens is arguably the primary function of any government. Government establishes the environmental conditions in which all other societal elements operate. While the community sector, the media and academia all play fundamental roles in fighting poverty, it is the role of government to ensure that environmental conditions conducive to poverty eradication are cultivated.

Whether a country is developing or developed there are some key principles that should guide government. In one extreme, a country may have very limited economic opportunities, underdeveloped public administration and legal systems, and limited social capital. The mechanisms government would use in this case would centre on leveraging other funding sources, developing sound governance systems and building social capacity. As a country’s economy develops, however, it may focus on instituting a welfare safety net and contributing to the social agenda in international forums. But although the actions taken by government will differ as a country moves along the continuum toward development, its fundamental goals remain the same:
1. Institute sound governance
2. Leverage non-government sector
3. Improve access to services
4. Give minority groups a voice
5. Support vulnerable in society
6. Support conditions favourable to economic development
7. Encourage public discussion

These seven principles are first outlined in more detail, and are then applied to some individual country situations in a brief analysis of some key issues facing governments in Indonesia, Brunei, Japan, Laos and Australia.

1. Sound governance and transparency
A political and public administration system that is transparent, and free from corruption and mismanagement is a fundamental precursor to a government’s ability to take effective steps to fight poverty. Without this platform a country is unlikely to receive significant international aid support and funding is unlikely to find its way to the people that need assistance. A transparent and stable system will create conditions conducive to business investment, which will in turn stimulate the economy and provide job opportunities.

It is also important that laws and programs do not perpetuate or promote inequalities, or provide perverse incentives. Government plays a key role in shifting cultural attitudes by implementing laws that are fair and protect the rights of minorities and the vulnerable in society. For example, anti-discrimination legislation may be a key first step toward eliminating discrimination toward women or Indigenous people. Government should then lead by example to adopt employment practices that do not discriminate on such grounds.

It is the responsibility of government to ensure laws are enforced fairly and consistently, which will engender trust between citizens and government and ensure injustices are not perpetuated. Laws and programs should be frequently evaluated, drawing on existing research and partnering with academia to evaluate effects on society and institute reforms that pre-empt, and much as possible, changing societal trends.

Government structures should be consistently reviewed to ensure they are streamlined and efficient, as an effective welfare system does not necessarily require ‘big government’. Where there are multiple levels of government it is important for there to be a clear differentiation of roles and minimal overlapping of responsibilities so that administration is as seamless as possible.

2. Non-government sector
The limitations of government need to be recognised, and the existence of non-government organisations (NGOs) supported to see gaps in service delivery filled, particularly where government lacks the local information or the funding to respond itself. The non-government sector has the advantage of being able to respond more quickly to emerging need, and can more easily identify and implement local solutions. Particularly for developing
countries, creating conditions conducive to NGO participation can be an effective way to leverage resources where government's funding may be constrained.

By supporting NGOs, government can effectively support and build on existing local capacity and leadership, build social capital, and encourage innovative solutions to local issues. For example, a government might implement a small grant funding scheme to support local organisations in addressing locational disadvantage. Funding must, however, be provided 'with no strings attached' so that the independence of these organisations from government is maintained.

NGO networks should be promoted and facilitated where possible, as should forums that communicate ideas back to government. Government should ensure that legislation is conducive to the effective operation of NGOs. For example, through tax concessions for charitable organisations, and to corporations for practising corporate responsibility.

International engagement
Governments of developing economies should further utilise available resources from international governments or organisations. Conditions conducive to effective use of aid money should be cultivated, and governments should partner with international organisations to identify need areas. Developed countries, rather than being aid recipients, should focus on being providers of international aid to build capacity abroad.

Given the interdependence of markets in this globalised economy, all governments, whether developed or developing should take steps to engage in discourse in international forums, in this way contributing to regional and global policies and strategies.

3. Access to services
Government should work to improve access to services, in particular education and health. Infrastructure should be invested in and maintained, and public transport systems should target high-need areas.

There is a clear correlation between lack of education and poverty. Provision of education should be a key focus of government. Government should set minimum standards, develop policies that support families who may otherwise rely on child labour, and take steps to improve access to schools, particularly in remote areas. For developing countries where universal free education, particularly up to high school, is not realistic due to funding constraints, a focus could be put on vocational training from early school years to ensure job readiness for those that cannot continue.

Government should continually improve provision of health care services, and promote access to such services. As noted above, in developing countries where government resources are scarce, this may be by creating conditions that simply support the work of NGOs or international aid agencies, or in developed countries could extend to establishment of a government funded universal health care system.

4. Giving minorities a voice
It is the role of government to consult with minority or vulnerable groups on matters affecting them, and ensure that they are respected and included. One way government may do this is through public awareness campaigns that promote respect and encourage discussion of issues. For example, an advertising campaign denouncing violence against women.

Even in democratic countries, government has a responsibility to ensure that policies are not implemented that unacceptably disadvantage a minority, even where there is majority support for the policy.

To ensure the voices of minority groups can be heard, government should establish consultative groups that speak on behalf of groups and can represent ideas and views to government. Representation of minorities in government should also be encouraged, and quotas may even be considered (as used in New Zealand).

5. Supporting vulnerable in society
Government should ensure that the vulnerable in society are supported in a manner that is respectful. In more developed countries this may mean establishing a safety net that provides income support to those unable to work, funded from general revenue. Government should, however, ensure that such programs do not create a disincentive to work, and avoids breeding dependency on government assistance by focusing on job readiness and training. Where establishment of a safety net is not feasible, government should ensure it is aware of all community operated services, and publicises these and refers people to them as appropriate. For example, advising people of the existence of mental health services and promoting awareness of the prevalence of mental health issues in the community.

An important way that government can support the vulnerable in society is by identifying groups that have limited bargaining power in relation to employment conditions, and working to equalise this through establishment of fair minimum working conditions so that workers, particularly in low skilled occupations, are not exploited.
6. Supporting conditions favourable to economic development

Business development should be encouraged to see job opportunities created so that the economy is stimulated. Clear legislation governing corporations in their activities should be put in place so that international investors can have confidence in the safety of the market. It may also be appropriate to have tax concessions for corporations to encourage their establishment.

The long-term sustainability of development and business practices should be a key concern of government from the outset. Particularly where an economy relies on its natural resources it needs to ensure that they are not destroyed by over-use or insensitive development.

7. Encouraging debate, sharing of ideas, continual reviewing and critiquing

Government is often better at implementing new policy than evaluating how existing programs or policies have affected society. It would do well to partner with universities and researchers to draw on existing research and develop methodologies to review and evaluate policies in light of societal trends. This knowledge will develop an evidence base for effective law reform.

Information about government activities should be communicated to society. To achieve this government should focus on engaging with media by issuing press releases about key findings and initiatives. Public debate and involvement in decision making processes should be encouraged. One example is by bringing people together to discuss ideas. For example, bringing together youth representatives to discuss issues that concern them and engage them in the political process.

Country analysis

Examples of application of these principles to some particular country scenarios are presented below in order to demonstrate that even though governments may be limited by a lack of resources, there are still logical steps that can be taken in pursuit of these principles that will take countries close to overcoming poverty.

JAPAN

Key issue 1: Welfare system centred on corporations, dual systems to redistribute wealth

Proposed action: Streamline welfare system

Streamline and restructure Japan's welfare system so that there is one progressive tax system with support for those who cannot work to be paid out of general revenue. This will mean a higher marginal tax rate but will not necessarily increase the tax burden on citizens. The effect on the corporate sector can be minimised by tax concessions for corporations, and amounts that were previously paid into social insurance for employees could be redirected to employee retirement funds.

Key issue 2: Cultural attitudes toward societal issues

There appears to be limited awareness among regular citizens of issues such as domestic violence and homelessness. In particular, the causes of these societal issues and society's collective responsibility to act.

Proposed action: Government support of NGOs and public awareness campaigns

Government should lead by example on these issues by supporting non-government activities that protect the vulnerable in society. One way it could do this is through a more simple system of tax concessions for not for profit organisations. It should also develop media campaigns that make clear statements against any kind of abuse, and encourages public support of, and sympathy for, those who are unemployed or homeless.

Key issue 3: Erosion of family support structures

An ageing population and low birth rate has led to the erosion of traditional family support structures, so that the aged and unemployed are increasingly vulnerable and at the mercy of corporations to dictate working conditions.

Proposed action: Industrial reform

Some changes that would assist would be to implement minimum standards for part-time workers, and to enforce anti-discrimination laws so that corporations are prevented from discriminating against workers on the basis of age or gender.

INDONESIA

Key issue 1: Centralisation

Centralization of government is a big problem in Indonesia, as it has resulted in centralized and absolute power. Economic activities have become expensive due
to the many layers of bureaucracy and charges. In a centralized system, the central government is responsible for all regions simultaneously. This is extremely difficult in a country as diverse as vast as Indonesia. Centralization has turned out to be ineffective and has not overcome regional disparity. With decentralization, regional governments (both kota and kabupaten), with improved level of discretion to determine expenditure priorities, will be able to provide what is most needed by their own people.

*Proposed action:* Decentralisation

Decentralization and restructuring of sub-national governments has been widely adopted worldwide. Decentralization has been used as a means to achieve development goals, especially through provision of better public services. Moves to decentralise in Indonesia need to be supported, and effective systems put in place to ensure efficient administration systems that do not duplicate functions, and to ensure sharing of public funds between levels of government. Decentralization is not an end in itself, but rather a means to accelerate improvement in living standards for all people.

**Key issue 2: Lack of education**

Indonesia has more than 200 million people, and almost 40% are concentrated on Java Island. Most people have only a basic education. Latest data show that only 10% of people that have a bachelor degree from a university. Lack of education limits opportunities for people to improve their standard of living by accessing higher education or advancing their careers.

*Proposed action:* Focus on vocational training and promoting scholarship opportunities

The government should focus on providing institutions that provide vocational training so that citizens can develop entrepreneurship which leads to increased employment opportunities. Scholarship programs should also be encouraged to support students from low socio-economic backgrounds continue in education.

**BRUNEI**

**Key Issue 1: Reliance on non-renewable resources (oil and gas) as a source of wealth**

Brunei Darussalam's natural resources are oil and gas which are non-renewable resources. For many decades, the oil and gas have been the major contributors to Brunei's economy. The Government of Brunei gives huge subsidies to people, for example, the subsidy for petrol is up to 50%. However, if the country is not prepared with alternative sources of income, poverty may become an issue in the future if these resources are depleted.

*Proposed Action:* Diversify by developing agriculture and international trade

It is proposed that Brunei diversify its sources of wealth such as developing agriculture and encouraging international trade. This will combat poverty, enhance the economy and encourage self-reliance. Encouraging international trade will boost the economy and diversify sources of wealth.

**Key Issue 2: Difficulty in starting up a business (red tape)**

In Brunei, there is considerable red tape involved in setting up a business. The applicants need to go to many departments and agencies and wait for a long time for the proposal to be approved. Because of this, the unemployed prefer to wait for government employment rather than start their own business.

*Proposed Action:* Streamlined approval process to start businesses

The government needs to provide a streamlined approval process for starting businesses to encourage the involvement of citizens in business. Government should set up a one-stop agency where the process can be done at one location.

**Key Issue 3: Limited awareness of poverty issues and government limitations**

There is limited reporting of poverty issues in the media which leads to limited awareness of poverty issues.

*Proposed Action:* Greater engagement with media and encouragement of debate and new ideas.

Working with the media will ensure government is able to communicate effectively with citizens and learn about issues facing them. It will also encourage participation in decisions that affect citizens.

**LAOS**

**Key Issue 1: Low income in majority of population**

The majority of Lao citizens have an income that is below the poverty line, particularly among minority groups and those in remote areas.

*Proposed Action:* Leverage not-for-profit sector

Government should leverage the not-for-profit sector and international aid to develop small business opportunities. For example, start-up funding for business ventures with small loans to be repaid by the recipients in
the community. Such programs would stimulate the market and promote employment and business opportunities for vulnerable groups such as the aged, people with disability, women and unemployed youth. There should also be a focus on vocational training so that people are equipped to pursue these opportunities.

**Key Issue 2: Low education**

There are significant gaps between education opportunities for girls and boys, with girls often required to work in the household rather than go to school. Language barriers also affect educational outcomes for minority groups, and access is restricted to schools, particularly due a lack of facilities in remote areas.

*Proposed Action: Increase supply of teachers*

Create incentives for teachers to work in remote areas and develop teacher training centres to address supply. Leverage international aid and put focus on improving access to schools by building and improving roads and developing boarding accommodation in towns for remote students.

**Key Issue 3: Limited economic activity**

There are limited employment opportunities in Laos due to an underdeveloped economy.

*Proposed Action: Develop clear corporations legislation*

Lao government has set up the National Growth and Poverty Eradication Strategy (NGPES) which is a comprehensive framework for growth, development and poverty reduction. This strategy needs to be implemented so that progress can be made to sustain economic growth and eradicate mass poverty. In order to achieve these objectives, government needs to encourage investment in opportunities for hydro-electric power and mining which utilize Lao rich natural resources. To do this an effective public administration system is required that is free from corruption, as well as a clear legal framework for business and a favorable tax environment.

**AUSTRALIA**

**Key Issue 1: Relationship with Indigenous Australians**

The Australian Government has a long legacy of trying to 'help' Aboriginal people, however quite often such assistance has had unforeseen consequences and has further fractured relations.

*Proposed Action: Genuine engagement*

Government should take time to listen to the issues affecting communities and to develop genuine partnerships that foster ownership of solutions. This may be done by establishing a consultative body that represents the views of the people and communicates government initiatives so that they may have true effect in fighting poverty.

**Key Issue 2: Pension adequacy**

Recent studies have shown that pension levels are virtually insufficient to maintain a reasonable standard of living. With the recent economic downturn, retirement funds have been significantly eroded which may put further pressure on government resources to support the aged.

*Proposed Action: Support the aged to continue in part-time employment activities, and strengthen carer’s provisions for those who support their aged parents.*

Government should ensure that those who desire to continue to earn a part-time wage are supported in this by flexible work practices, such as the ability to work from home. Family responsibility to care for the elderly should be promoted, and provisions for carers strengthened so that providing care is seen as a valuable service to society. This will potentially decrease the burden on the welfare system.
The Role of Government in Overcoming Poverty

KEY CHALLENGES
- Limited government money for programs
- Conflict / war
- Natural disasters
- Cultural attitudes
- Interdependency of markets

7 GUIDING PRINCIPLES
ROLE OF GOVERNMENT:
1. Institute sound governance
2. Partner with non-government sector
3. Improve access to services
4. Give minority groups a voice
5. Support vulnerable in society
6. Support conditions favourable to economic development
7. Encourage public discussion

1. SOUND GOVERNANCE
- Free from corruption / mismanagement
- Fair legislation / programs
- Continual evaluation
- Law enforcement
- Efficient administration

2. NON-GOVERNMENT SECTOR
- Leverage NGO capacity to fill gaps
- Support locally driven solutions
- Tax concessions
- International engagement

3. ACCESS TO SERVICES
- Infrastructure investment
- Public transport
- Education / health services
4. MINORITIES
- Anti-discrimination legislation
- Public awareness campaigns
- Representation
- Consultative bodies / panel of experts

6. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
- Encourage investment:
  - Corporations Law / tax concessions
- Long-term sustainability
  - Environmental protection

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- Encourage investment:
  - Corporations Law / tax concessions
- Long-term sustainability
  - Environmental protection

7. PUBLIC DISCUSSION
- Partner with academia
- Keep society informed - utilise media
- Bring people together to debate ideas

JAPAN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY ISSUES</th>
<th>PROPOSED ACTION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Welfare system centred on corporations, dual system</td>
<td>Streamline welfare system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural attitudes toward societal issues</td>
<td>Support NGOs, promote awareness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Erosion of family support structures</td>
<td>Industrial reform</td>
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INDONESIA

<table>
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<td>Centralisation</td>
<td>Support decentralisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of education</td>
<td>Vocational training, scholarships</td>
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### BRUNEI

<table>
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<th>PROPOSED ACTION</th>
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<tr>
<td>Reliance on non-renewable resources</td>
<td>Diversify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty starting up businesses</td>
<td>Reduce red tape/streamline process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of awareness of poverty issues</td>
<td>Engage with media</td>
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</tbody>
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### LAOS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY ISSUES</th>
<th>PROPOSED ACTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low household income</td>
<td>Leverage not for profit sector, income generation programs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Limited education opportunities</td>
<td>Increase supply of teachers-leverage international aid</td>
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<tr>
<td>Limited economic activity</td>
<td>Encourage investment-Corporations legislation</td>
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### AUSTRALIA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY ISSUES</th>
<th>PROPOSED ACTION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationship with Indigenous Australians</td>
<td>Genuine engagement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ageing population- load on welfare system</td>
<td>Strengthen flexible work practices, carers provisions</td>
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NPO/NGO: Japanese NPOs—“the yuzu of the future”

Sandra Puliran GANI, RSW (Philippines)
Arde WISBEN (Indonesia)
Dang Huong GIANG (Vietnam)

1. Who we are?
We are group of community workers from Philippines, Indonesia and Vietnam. We would like to be most honest in expressing our interpretations of what we saw in Japan. We are aware that our observations can be selective, given a small number of NPOs we visited and the short period of time we stayed in Japan. We also acknowledge that our views might reflect our cultural background and profession as community workers, therefore we are not able to see poverty from the perspectives of other stakeholders.

2. What we saw?

<table>
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<tr>
<th>NGO roles in general</th>
<th>NGO roles in Japan</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When government does not provide basic services, NGOs fill the gap</td>
<td>This is the biggest role of NPOs in Japan. Many NPOs receive funding from the government to provide services: such as youth support centers, shelters for homeless, mother and child centers. While it is an important role for NPOs, these service providing NPOs should also press the government for improved policies and raise public awareness.</td>
<td>It seems to us that many Japanese NPOs provide practical and short-term interventions(such as giving hot meals, providing shelter, providing after-school programs for children whose parents have to work, etc). Very few NPOs work to address root causes of poverty. NPOs rely a lot on the government funding for social services. NPOs receive limited contribution from the private sector and community</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGOs play the watch dog/advocacy role: to monitor policies and policy implementation of government, to monitor business to protect public interests, to advocate/put pressure on the government and business sector</td>
<td>NPOs have a limited role in advocacy. There is a network of NPOs fighting poverty, but in general few advocacy networks exist. Union is weak, mostly protects the regular workers (left out non-regular workers-the most disadvantaged group). Tactics of NPOs are not confrontational, because of the tradition of &quot;avoiding conflict and respect seniors (politicians are senior). Cooperation between NPOs and media is weak.</td>
<td>It is hard for NPOs to fulfill the advocacy role because their funding is largely depends on the government. Community support/donation for NGOs is limited. There is a need for independent think tanks.</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGOs play a role in community building: making people socially and politically active</td>
<td>Many NPOs are not community-based: of 5 NPOs we visited, only Kotobuki-cho is community-based (which is initiated and supported by the community, involves community members, serves community needs). NPOs have not paid sufficient attention to public education about the issues they are working on (more on curing, not preventing). NPOs have not yet involved the community in its activities.</td>
<td>Limited public awareness about poverty, homelessness, domestic violence as well as the awareness and confidence in their ability to contribute to addressing the problems</td>
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NGOs pioneer in trying new approaches (then advocate for government and other sectors to scale up)

Some NPOs are trying new things (Second Harvest, Kamonohashi Project)
Some other observations:
- Despite the lack of recognition of society, the low job security, staff of NPOs in Japan is highly motivated. We think this is the most important factor for each NPO to develop and the entire NPO sector to blossom.
- We saw the upcoming economic crisis can be an opportunities for NPOs in Japan to awake the public and press the government for major change. NPOs should not waste this “crisis”.
- International migration is a serious issue for Japan. Japan is an aging society. In the future Japan will face shortage in labor force. Japanese NGOs should look at immigration issues now. At present, migrant workers are not well treated in Japan economically, socially and politically.
- We saw that Japanese NPOs have not paid sufficient attention to gender issues.

3. How to improve?
- NPOs should pay attention to strategic issues and root causes: (i) why people are poor? (ii) why do they become homeless? (iii) why domestic violence is severe in Japan?
- NPOs should increase public education about the issues, about NPOs work, and about community roles:
  - NPOs should develop internship programs for young people
  - NPOs should develop volunteer base to exposure people to the issues and solutions
  - NPOs should develop field trips for youth to expose them to the issues (for example: field trip to Kotobuki, etc)
  - NPOs should develop membership and supporters groups (like Kamonohashi Project): send regular updates to members, ask members for donations, involve members in NPOs work
  - NPOs should develop strategies to work with the media (use media to educate the public about the issues)
- NPOs should increase networking with other NPOs in Japan/building coalition
  - NPOs should come together to pressure the government to create a more favorable legal framework for NPO operation.
  - Give award “NPO of the Year”: set standard for good practices and encourage new initiatives
  - NPOs come together to contribute fees to set up a coordinating body (for example: network of social enterprises, etc)
  - NPOs should learn from semi-government entities (such as association of farmers, association of forest workers, etc) about setting up networks, because these associations have more experience in networking.
- NPOs should increase advocacy/watch dog role:
  - NPOs should be financially independent from the government/get more funding from the community
  - NPOs should work with academia to (i) obtain information and data, (ii) collaborate on studies, using NPOs strength in direct experience of project implementation, (iii) publish books and articles (such as the book on poverty by Makoto Yuasa).
  - NPOs should develop its research capacity.
  - NPOs should develop a strategy to use the media for advocacy
- NPOs should increase fund raising from community.

4. What do we bring home?
For all three countries:
- Leadership role: we learn from Umaji that the village head and the leaders of the agriculture about commitment, courage, imagination, resilience and trust in people's power.
- Business model of cooperative in Umaji village and in Kamonohashi Project: we learn that these business models need constant learning and adapting, and it is possible to balance between business development and social development.

Indonesia:
- I learnt from Umaji village how they promote the village life style to invite outsiders to contribute to the village development. I learnt about how they develop a marketing strategy to sell their product successfully.
- I learnt about the government's good will to serve the community (in the case of Umaji village). I also learnt about how Umaji creates an egalitarian community where everyone benefits from development and there is a fair distribution of wealth.
- I learnt about community participation to sort the garbage and manage solid waste.

Philippines:
- At present, Philippines greatly depend on the food aid from other countries. The concept on Food Bank I believe is very important especially for the provinces of Maguindanao and Shariff Kabunsuan because these are the mostly affected places in terms of food insecurity. The affected people as well as the government should not just depend on the assistance from the international community but also the well-off Filipino people themselves must take initiative in
helping its own people.

- Japan as a country is always associated to being clean and in-order. One of the concept I appreciate in this country is the way they manage their waste materials. Though at present the country use incinerators, one of the officials shared that solid waste management would also give income for the poor people and for the community and not just make the place clean.

- The partnership built among the participants from different countries is very significant because it bonds us together to work hand in hand in achieving our dreams for our communities and for our country. I will treasure the group and I will communicate to them regularly to exchange updates about projects and other initiatives in fighting poverty and in improving our own countries.

Vietnam:

- I learnt that civil society is very important, even in a country where the government and business took care of most of the needs and welfare (education, health care, housing, etc). Civil society should always take the watch dog role (in Japan, when government and business made decisions in the mid-1990s to deregulate the market, civil society did not raise much voice. The result is that the situation of employment and welfare is getting worse).

- I learnt that in a globalized world, a rich and powerful country like Japan can suffer, too. In order to stay competitive in the global market, Japan chose to a path that leads to many social problems: non-regular workers, long working hours (absence of fathers from home), weakened community ties, etc…
slide 1

Japanese NPOs: “the yuzu of the future”

By: Sandra Gani; Arle Wibben; Dong Huong Giang

slide 2

What NPOs do?

- augment government assistance
- NPOs fill the gap between government and its service to the people
- Watch dog / advocacy role
- Community building
- Pioneer in trying new approaches

slide 3

NPO in Japan

- provides practical and short-term interventions
- many receive funding from the government to provide services
- have a limited role in advocacy
- mostly not community-based

slide 4

How to improve NPO?

slide 5

NPO should pay attention to strategic issues and root causes

- Why people are poor?
- Why do they become homeless?
- Why domestic violence is severe in Japan?

slide 6

Increase public education about the issues

- Internship programs for young people
- Develop volunteer base to expose people to the issues and solutions
- Field trips for youth to expose them to the issues
- Develop membership and supporters groups
- Develop strategies to work with the media
slide 7

Increase networking with other NPOs in Japan/building coalition

- Give award “NPO of the Year”
- NPOs come together to contribute fees to set up a coordinating body
- Learn from semi-government entities

slide 8

Increase advocacy / watch dog role

- NPOs should be financially independent from the government
- NPOs should work with academia;
  1. Obtain information and data
  2. Collaborate on studies, using NPOs' strength in direct experience of project implementation,
  3. Publish books and articles
- Develop a strategy to use the media for advocacy

slide 9

What will we bring home..

- preserve the village life style and save outsiders
- women's social role in the village
- environmental protection and recycling
- clean village
- social harmony
- concept of rice banking
- concept of livelihood project in each community village
- the community's support that we need as a group of problems
- sandal

slide 10

Thank You

- Tetsu
- Cam
- Miriam
POVERTY – AN OVERVIEW

Poverty lines vary in time and place, and each country uses lines which are appropriate to its level of development, societal norms and values. A person is considered poor if his or her consumption or income level falls below some minimum level necessary to meet basic needs. Poverty is hunger, lack of shelter, being sick and not being able to see a doctor, not having access to school and not knowing how to read, not having a job and fear for the future, living one day at a time, losing a child to illness brought about by unclean water, powerlessness, lack of representation and freedom.

Generally, poverty can be defined as two types – Absolute poverty and Relative poverty. Absolute poverty is synonymous with destitution and occurs when people cannot obtain adequate resources. Absolute poverty means about the same everywhere, and can be eradicated as demonstrated by some countries. Relative poverty occurs when people do not enjoy a certain minimum level of living standards as determined by a government that vary from country to country, sometimes within the same country. Relative poverty occurs everywhere, is said to be increasing, and may never be eradicated. (extract from BusinessDictionary.com)

STATUS QUO OF POVERTY IN REPUBLIC OF KOREA, PHILIPPINES, SINGAPORE AND THAILAND

Korea

The problems Korean society is facing these days can be summarized as polarization of society, aging society and social exclusion. Since the foreign currency crisis in 1997, Korea has faced a serious unemployment problem. 1,500,000 people lost their jobs and became very poor and families were also broken through divorce, etc. A committee was set up to create jobs instead of providing financial aid. It led efforts to create social jobs and support social enterprises as a third sector, and tried to structure the process of starting up and operating social enterprises by providing them with support for business skills, very low lending, etc.

As the problem of youth unemployment has got more and more chronic, an alternative youth employment programmes are seen as required to develop, to encourage the young to work together and deal with their own problems independently.

Philippines

The Philippines has been poor for the longest time. The Philippines was declared a property of the crown of Spain and a domain of the Catholic Church. This state of affairs lasted for almost 300 years. Its freedom from Spanish rule was cut short by the arrival of the Americans who stayed for a good part of the 20th century. The rulers have changed but the plight of the ordinary Filipinos did not: many were still landless and homeless. And since its independence in 1946, it has been engaged in the journey of building a nation that every Filipino can be proud of.

A nation of 85 million people spread across an archipelago of 7,107 islands is still engaged in a struggle to liberate itself from poverty. A third of its people are below the poverty line and an estimated 80% are still landless after two massive land reforms. There is still 40% of its people are still considered food poor who have to live with involuntary hunger on a daily basis.
Singapore

Different in Singapore where there is hardly any of its population living below the poverty line, poverty in Singapore is mainly referred to households with total income falling below $1500 per month. The government lines up a series of social initiatives to assist the affected group to level up with the rest of the society. With an overall population of 4.8 million (as of June 2008), government’s expenditure is significant on education.

The government of Singapore believes that education is the root of increasing the quality of life of individuals. Various types of assistance are being provided in education-related areas, starting from basic education for children as early as the age of four years old. For the workforce level, lifelong learning is widely promoted for individuals and families to equip themselves relevantly in order to gain financial independence and self-sustainability.

Thailand

In 2003, the Thai Government announced a new policy of solving housing problem of one million houses of urban poor all over Thailand cities in five years with two approaches – firstly, by constructing new low-income housing by National Housing Authority and secondly, slum upgrading by Community Organization Development Institute (CODI).

These steps to help Thailand overcome the problem of housing in its cities, where 70% of the land are on rental without secure contract, 30% are squatters and about 445 communities are facing the threat of eviction. About 70-80% of the population cannot afford housing in market and public system.

PART 1
INSIGHTS & REFLECTIONS

Like in many other countries, there is no poverty line per se in Japan. Understanding poverty in Japan demands a holistic and comprehensive point of view. The instances of joblessness, homelessness, domestic violence scenes (DV), and the “Not in Education, Employment or Training” (NEET) must be seen against the background of Japanese society as a whole with particular attention the cultural foundations of these problems. There is a need to evaluate and think about this novel situation beyond the confines of the economic and social security system.

While support from the Japanese Government may be highly required to achieve the desired outcome, the society, especially the younger generations, could also play an active role in together tackling the social issues facing the country. Updates and information on the present social issues and economic status in Japan may be seen as important to be shared with the society.

IMPRESSIONS AND OBSERVATION ON JAPANESE LIFE, SOCIETY AND CULTURE

i. Sense of Security in Japanese Society

It is observed that Japan has a sense of security, based mainly on job-centered life which will ensure them to have access to the existing social benefits. Where employment serves as the key factor in increasing the quality of lives of the Japanese, and copes with the current economic situation in Japan, lifetime employment is very much desired for by each individual. Lifetime or regular employment in Japan promises security such that they are secured in the job for their entire life and are entitled to all the employment benefits provided. In comparison to Singapore, though lifetime employment is also desired by each individual, it is always tagged to the model of lifelong learning to keep an individual continuously relevant with the industry and to be potentially excluded from the retrenchment schemes.

The concept of engaging non-regular workers by most organizations in Japan is currently being highly practiced to cut down operational costs, leaving opportunities for regular employment to be low in numbers. This has consequently contributed to the employment scene in Japan, which might weaken the future of the affected Japanese individuals, as it will be left uncertain. The youths are seen as one of the mostly affected groups as they are missing a strong foothold in the employment market to start their career. Deepening recession which is occurring currently may potentially rock the foundations of the Japanese economy and therefore threaten the security of jobs for these individuals.

In comparison to countries such as Singapore, Philippines and Thailand, non-regular employment, which is also known as temporary or contractual jobs, are mostly applicable for short-term assignments and projects, which normally last for a period of 3 months minimum to 12 months maximum. It is discussed that higher job security could be created through introducing more regular employment and the conversion of non-regular employment to regular employment.

With the decrease in the fertility rate caused by the rise in the trend of late marriages, and increased in the life span, Japan is also facing with the rapid aging of its population. This group has been left deprived of job as employment is not made possible for them.
ii. Mindset in dealing with the problems

The presence of social problems is one thing and facing them is another matter. It was observed that there is a strong sense of individuality in Japanese society that is rooted in the concept of self-responsibility. This is also re-enforced by the sense of shame. If one encounters a problem the tendency is to solve it alone rather than seek immediate support from others. This tendency was exemplified by victims of domestic violence (DV) who would not seek support from neighbors but would rather deal with the problem themselves. This tendency for self-reliance is double-edged: while it may foster a strong sense of independence that leads to productivity it may also cause social isolation and separation.

This act of behavior become more alarming when put against the background of a waning sense of family and community in Japanese society. As seen in the experience of the man in Kotobuki-cho, it was too shameful for him to lose his job that he had to separate from his wife and family. When poverty (or any problem for that matter) strikes an individual or a family, the victim is left to fend for himself rather than tap into the support and encouragement of his family and friend. The potentially rich source of support instead becomes a burden. This lead to a sense of isolation aggravates the already negative situation of joblessness, homelessness, or domestic violence with psycho-emotional baggage that could have been avoidable.

There is also a strong tendency to always turn to government for solutions and support. This was exemplified by the various visits to NPOs: lack of budget to support DV victims in Moyai, need to find jobs for the willing and able in Kotobuki-cho, the clamor for better labor laws and regulations from RENGO, etc. This dependence of the capacity of government to help may reveal a strong sense of confidence and trust in the system, but it also betrays the reality that there are no other avenues beyond government for the Japanese to seek support. In the rare case where government does not have a program, as is the case of Second Harvest, the people are left to simply endure their condition. In the setting of the countries of the authors, there exist alternative support systems. For example, when people lack food they may go the temple (Thailand) or seek out an NGO that offers services for their needs (Philippines). This alternative support system is seemingly absent in Japanese society.

However, it must also be pointed out that these tendencies become difficult to understand when put against some contradicting observations of Japanese society. For instance, the absence of immediate support from family or friends is not commensurable to the willingness of Japanese to help a lost stranger on the street (as experienced by Chawanad from Thailand). This inability to express feelings freely coupled with the stance grave seriousness is hardly commensurable with the deep sense of art, rich history and culture of Japan. Lastly, while there exists a very high level of trust among Japanese people, it is only a mystery for other Asians why this trust does not translate into communal care and support. Finally, the urban isolation felt in Tokyo is a stark contrast to the sense of community and identity expressed in Umaji Village.

iii. Perspectives on Poverty

While the problem of poverty does exist in Japan and demands recognition, it must also be taken into perspective and given a proper context. The number of homeless (est. 19,000), hungry (est. 650,000), or out of employment is still a very small portion of the Japanese population. Compared to other countries, these numbers are significantly low. For example, in the Philippines 40% of the population suffer from chronic hunger. Or in Thailand, 17% of the populations, do not have homes of their own. While the problems do exist, it must be said that the poverty levels is still within solvable reach of Japan. That is, that the problems have not reached gigantic proportions enough to overwhelm the resources available in Japan. But this is not to mean that it will be easy and immediate. As a matter of perspective, it must be considered how much Japan gives in foreign aid and how much it costs to provides homes to the homeless or support victims of DV. Or consider the availability of infrastructures (roads, information technology, electricity, potable water, etc.)
in Japan that may facilitate delivery of services and interventions. Such conditions are considerably absent in Thailand or the Philippines but these countries are dealing with poverty levels way beyond the status quo of Japan.

But this is not to say that money and resources are the solutions to the poverty problem. Japan has more assets other than money that it may tap into to deal with the situation. It has so many opportunities at its command if a decisive measure is launched to address poverty. For example, the innate discipline and superb work ethic may be summoned to address homelessness. The high levels of social trust and confidence may also be channeled to spur the much needed sense of community to provide social support. Or consider the untapped potential and energy of the youth to participate in addressing social issues. Or consider the “Umaji attitude” that finds roots in the resilience and creativity of the Japanese soul: if Umaji can do it, why can’t Tokyo?

Finally, in a society with a highly efficient government and reliable services there has been no need for an active civil society. But now that the economic landscape is changing, it might be an opportune time to enter a new phase in Japanese history. Throughout this program, the authors have encountered numerous NPOs which are actively responding to these new social problems. While they are delivering quality service and offering sincere care, it is also very obvious that these are isolated efforts that have yet to be federated. There are isolated pockets of inspiration, passion, and action working silently in yet unknown corners of Japan. The success and inspiration of these groups will achieve so much more when put together as a united front that sketch the beginning of a Japanese civil society.

**Examined individually, Umaji Village, Kamonohashi, Second Harvest and others are indeed inspiring and notable. But put together, they form a formidable coalition that speaks of the spirit of caring and sharing that is innately Japanese, albeit buried in the flurry of economic development of the past 20-30 years. There is gold in the seemingly isolated lives of Japanese poor or the seemingly apathetic Japanese citizenry if one knows where to start digging for it.**

**Part II**

**OUR IDEAS & POSSIBLE RECOMMENDATIONS**

We are in the opinion that the key of overcoming poverty is from ‘community and solidarity’. Our idea is to focus on recovering community in Tokyo - “Bring Umaji to Tokyo!”

Promoting awareness on social entrepreneurship and other social issues with government backing is one of the ways that we feel Japan should adopt to educate its citizens on the existence on the social issues. This is to allow the citizens to understand the social situation in Japan so as to inculcate a sense of community and to gear them to together think of solutions to solve the issue as a whole.

The tools that we would like to suggest are the usage of media such as television, newspaper, etc. Creating open opportunities for the Japanese to think of solvable solutions in overcoming the social issues in Japan through creative educational media campaign such as reality shows such as the “TV Champion” model, where the Japanese, especially the youths as they are going to be the future leaders of Japan, could creatively suggests ideas and ways in tackling a particular social issues.

Another reality TV show, “Lead India Model” programme, focuses on the search of future political leaders from the common audience. Debate programmes could also be a form of the young Japanese to be aware of and discuss on social issues and creating ways of solving it. This would contribute to the social inclusion act among the Japanese. We suggest replacing “demonstrations” as “Street Exhibitions” to appear subtle and less aggressive. These activities could be approached in a fun and cool yet aspiring.

We also feel that the government sector, Non-profit Organizations (NPOs), business sectors and corporations and individuals that are concerned on the social scenes in Japan and that run with the same social objectives to work together to achieve the social missions. Programmes run by the respective non-profit organizations could be collaborated so that a holistic solution could be achieved at one time. Reward programmes could be introduced to motivate the people in Japan to be involved in community and social work and putting their hearts in the society. The Government and other corporations could come in to support the movement in terms of proposal approvals, funding and assistance.

The presence of an advisor in the each community group formed would suggest a controlled opinion on the social situations in Japan and to avoid confused understanding on the social scenes that exist in Japan, taking the examples of the Umaji Village and Tokyo city. This would create
common understanding of their shared issues and from these come up with solutions to these problems, and in the process to rebuild and/or regain their lost sense of community.

Last but not least, we are in the opinion that Japan Foundation should include the young Japanese to be on board the JENESYS Programme in Japan and to also bring them to visit other countries for greater insights to be imparted to the society in Japan.

Part III
WHAT DO WE BRING BACK TO OUR COUNTRIES FROM THE JENESYS EXPERIENCE?

REPUBLIC OF KOREA
- Rediscovery of poverty: Korean society is very similar to Japanese society in terms of economy, social welfare system, low fertility rate and aging society, etc. There is another kind of poverty.
- The value of solidarity: among sectors, among individuals sharing common problems, NPOs, and countries.
- The value of social entrepreneurship: people who can turn problem into opportunity (Umaji Village, Second Harvest, Kamonohashi, etc).

PHILIPPINES
- A new look at JAPAN: beyond the economy towards caring & sharing for the excluded, forgotten and isolated for building a "Japan-mura"
- Fresh hope for ASIA and OCEANIA: friendship among like-minded and common-hearted people. Ex: Singapore trip in January. Ex: World Hope day 2010 in Manila
- Fresh ideas for the Gawad Kalinga (GK) & PHILIPPINES: new friends in the campaign vs. poverty, organize study tours especially for Japanese youth, explore replication in India, Thailand, Malaysia, etc.

SINGAPORE
- This is indeed a great exposure and a wider eye opener for me to share with people in Singapore on the value and importance of sense of community and social capital.
- The experience in Umaji Village is a very memorable and valuable to instill a higher sense of commitment, dedication and determination among Singaporeans as an individual, community, entrepreneur, business people, organizations, etc.
- Great understanding on the culture in Japan. It has definitely made me a more motivated person to keep the society going.

THAILAND
- Share the experience with our group, Openspace, in terms of academic and informal way with friends and NGO organizations and community organisations.
- Connections and networking with the participants allow us to share the idea of our works in the future.
- Learn on the concept of “social enterprise” and explore how to adapt it to my organization or creating new idea.
- Links and collaboration with organizations in Japan.
- Write my experience in article, blog, website, handmade book
- Understand the idea of social enterprise and how other organizations, which the JENESYS group had visited, work
- Happiness & encouragement.

WE ARE A GROUP OF SATISFIED & HAPPY PARTICIPANTS OF THE JENESYS PROGRAMME
A SHORT TIME SPENT TOGETHER HAD CREATED THE CLOSENESSE AMONG US MOVING ON WITH THE SAME OBJECTIVE – “OVERCOMING POVERTY”
1. IMPRESSIONS ON JAPANESE LIFE, SOCIETY & CULTURE

- Mainly based on job-centred life
  - Employment as the main factor to increase quality of lives
  - Existence of culture that stresses on men to be the sole breadwinner of a household

- Regular vs Non-regular employment
  - Lifetime employment promises job security in Japan
  - Increase in non-regular employment, potential for an unstable future

1. IMPRESSIONS ON JAPANESE LIFE, SOCIETY & CULTURE

- Sense of Security in Japan

- Deepening recession leads to organizations and corporations to cut down on jobs
  - Affects the youth such that they are not getting employed after high school. Therefore, cause a delay in joining the workforce and career building, delay in starting a family and contributes to the low birth rate
  - Non-regular workers to remain in non-regular employment or out of employment
  - High aging population, the elderly are not getting employed
  - Lack of income and low survival

1. IMPRESSIONS ON JAPANESE LIFE, SOCIETY & CULTURE

- Mindset On Dealing With Problems

  - Strong sense of individuality in Japanese society that is rooted in the concept of self-responsibility, lead to isolation
    - A domestic violence victim may not want to seek support from neighbours due to shame

  - Too dependent on government support, hinders the affected to achieve own self-reliance, absence of alternative assistance

  - Individuals having difficulty in expressing his failure and feelings

Example 1
A Japanese can be helpful to a stranger on the road but not supportive of own family members who are depressed in losing a job

Example 2
Presence of sense of community in Umaji Village is absent in Tokyo
1. IMPRESSIONS ON JAPANESE LIFE, SOCIETY & CULTURE
   - Perspectives on Poverty
     - While poverty exists in Japan, the problems of homelessness, hunger and unemployment are relatively small.
     - Problems are within solvable means of Japan, with the factor of time.
     - Eg. In comparison to situations in Thailand and Philippines.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS
   - Promote public awareness on social enterprises and entrepreneurship.
     - Use media.
     - Collaboration with Government and corporations.
     - Provide support mechanisms.
     - Fun, Cool and Aspiring approach.
   - Examples:
     - Creative educational media campaigns such as debate programmes, reality TV show (Japan TV Champion, Lead India Model).
     - Reward systems for social interventions for problems (coupons for helping an elderly).

3. WHAT WE HAVE LEARNT?
   SINGAPORE
   - This is indeed a great exposure and a wider eye opener for me to share with people in Singapore on the value and importance of sense of community and social capital.
   - The experience in Utsugi Village is a very memorable and valuable to instill a higher sense of commitment, dedication and determination among Singaporeans as an individual, community, entrepreneur, business people, organizations, etc.
   - Great understanding on the culture in Japan. One way for sure it has made me to be a more motivated person to keep the society going.

   THAILAND
   - Share the experience with our group (parents) and also in academia and informal way with friends and NGO organisations.
   - Connection & links with our participants who share the idea of our works in the future.
   - Thinking about "social enterprise" how to adapt it to my organisation or creating new idea.
   - Writing my experience in article blog website, hand made book :)

   PHILIPPINES
   - A new look at JAPAN: beyond the economy towards caring & sharing for the excluded, forgotten and isolated for building a "Japan-mura".
   - Fresh ideas for the 6K & PHILIPPINES: new friends in the campaigns vs. poverty, organize study tours top for Japanese youth, explore replication in India, Thailand, Malaysia, etc.
   - KOREA
   - Rediscovery of poverty: Korean society is very similar with Japan society in economy, social welfare system, low fertility and aging society etc. And another kind of poverty.
   - The value of solidarity: among sectors, among individuals concerned common problem, among NPO's, among countries.
   - The value of social entrepreneurship: the people who can change problem into opportunity (usagi, second harvest, komonoshiki, etc).
slide 25

Demonstration as a festival.

slide 26

Please enjoy working.

slide 27

Please enjoy working.

slide 28

Please enjoy working.
The Role of Media and Advocacy in a Social Inclusion Approach

Myo Tha HTET (Myanmar)
Latheefa Beebi KOYA (Malaysia)
Kensuke MATSUEDA (Japan)
Caleb STARRENBURG (New Zealand)

Overview
The current global trend of recession is already impacting Japan, manifested in large scale job losses. Within the Japanese context, rising unemployment, an increase in the population of temporary labourers, and the high cost of living has witnessed a dramatic increase in the number of people living in poverty.

Neo-liberal market trends have further created an environment in which companies feel less loyalty to their employees and a decreased obligation for the welfare of their workers.

Despite this, there remains a prevailing belief that poverty does not exist in Japan.

It is the responsibility of the state to respond to this looming crisis of unemployment, temporary employment and corresponding poverty. A review of neoliberal market policies is required, and a reorientation of Japan's company-centered system towards a social inclusion approach.

The Role of Media
The term Fourth Estate refers to the media, both in its explicit capacity of advocacy and in its implicit ability to frame political issues.

Journalists are limited in their capacity to questions political ideologies, report on issues of social exclusion, and to advocate for greater inclusion, particularly in the context of the '24-hour news cycle'. The 24-hour news cycle has increased competition for audience share and the profit demands of corporate ownership.

"The press has moved toward sensationalism, entertainment and opinion, and away from traditional values of verification, proportion, relevance, depth, and quality of interpretation." (David Weaver, 2006)

Journalists are also constrained by their lack of professional knowledge.

"We journalists make it a point to know very little about an extremely wide variety of topics; this is how we stay objective." (Dave Barry)

The Role of Advocacy
"Advocacy is the pursuit of influencing outcomes, including public-policy and resource allocation decisions within political, economic, and social systems and institutions that directly affect people's lives." (David Cohen, 2001)

The relationship between the media and advocacy is one of fragile interdependence. The media rely on advocacy groups for news content and to perform their role as the Fourth Estate. Advocacy groups rely on the media as vehicle to bring their message to the public and policy makers.

Both the media and advocacy groups are currently and obstructed by their lack of information.

Access to Information and Statistics
The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) reported that 19.5 million people in Japan live below the relative poverty line.

But what exactly does this information mean? Who are these 19.5 million people? Does this include homeless people, refugees, unemployed, non regular workers, the disabled, elderly, and single mothers?

According to an article dated February 11, 2005, published in Asia Times Online entitled “Japan, land of rising poverty” by J Sean Curtin:

“A new Japanese government survey estimates that the number of fatherless families has skyrocketed, hitting 1.22 million in fiscal 2003 in the nation of 128 million. This is the highest number ever recorded and represents a massive 28.3% increase from the previous survey conducted five years ago. The figures also show that the vast majority of children in these households live far below the poverty line, creating a rapidly growing underclass of impoverished families.”

To tackle issue of poverty in Japan, more and better is essential. Every agency of the government should provide and keep records which are accessible to the public.

The state has a duty under the information disclosure law. Japan's Freedom of Information Act, the culmination...
The Role of Media and Advocacy in a Social Inclusion Approach

of more than 20 years of lobbying by democracy activists, took effect in April 2001. All central government agencies, including the Defense Agency, are subject to the law.

The purpose of the Act is to facilitate citizen oversight of government and increase public participation in policymaking.

Particularly in the context of policy related to welfare and poverty, information and statistics from the Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Labor are required.

While the Japanese government currently distributes information regarding the population of employed and unemployed citizens, as well as regular and non-regular workers, it is not sufficient to comprehend the whole poverty issue.

The lack of information may reflect a lack of political to comprehensively tackle the poverty issue. For example, the current social welfare system disadvantages non-regular workers, as well as the homeless, disabled, elderly and single mothers.

According to an article published on November 14, 2008 by Bloomberg.com entitled "Poverty, Pension Fears Drive Japan's Elderly Citizens to Crime" by Stuart Biggs and Sachiko Sakamaki:

"The government aims to cut 220 billion yen ($2.3 billion) from social welfare spending in each of the five years starting 2006 as it seeks to balance the budget by 2011. As part of this plan, the government introduced a new health insurance system that would raise premiums for some elderly patients.

The initiative has stirred anxiety about pensions and health care, and Japan's economic situation is doing little to help."

Proposals for Increased Social Inclusion

As has been noted, there exists various initiatives to tackle poverty; however there seems to lack an over-arching approach in policy framework. For example, The Tokyo Young Contingent Workers Union and Moyai have joined forces to create the Network Against Poverty through Mutual Help (Han-hinkon tasukeai nettowaku, hereafter "Tasukei-Net").

It is our proposal to form a broad coalition representing various stakeholders to lobby and advocate for the eradication of poverty.

The stakeholders must include:
1) NPOs – service providers for homeless, refugees, DV victims
2) NGOs – rights based
3) Unions
4) Media – journalists, editors
5) Lawyers
6) Medical practitioners
7) Academicians
8) Student/ youth groups
9) Artists

This coalition would act as a People's Ombudsman to monitor government officials and policymakers, to ensure implementation and enforcement of proper policies. It would lobby for policy to tackle poverty in a holistic manner, taking into account the various factors as mentioned above.

The main recommendation sought by the People's Ombudsman would be the following:-

1) The Japanese government should agree on an official poverty indicator. The government should embark on a comprehensive programme to record poverty related statistics, in order to better facilitate social inclusion policies.
2) Support legislative steps for tighter regulation of companies in regards to the employment of non regular workers.
3) Support the creation of a Special Ombudsman to monitor policies to address issues of unemployment and poverty.
4) Support an increase of budget for Public Assistance, as well as tax concessions for personal and company NPO donations
5) Support and promote 'Mura' community initiatives. In order for the People's Ombudsman to bring their message to the public and policy makers, they will embark on a multi-pronged campaign which would include the following:

1) An advocacy workshop for media professionals – awareness and informative skills on how to ask the "right question" on poverty issue.
2) Seeking endorsement from every election candidates (cross cutting party lines) for the 5 key recommendations of the People's Ombudsman and also keeping a "report-card" on elected members of the Parliament.
3) Creating various solidarity network with various community based organization – organizing seminars, workshops for community leaders and activists.
4) Organizing rights awareness workshop targeting workers – both regular and non regular.
5) Promoting and sharing success stories of "Umaji-mura Project" and "Kamonohashi Project" to promote social enterprise concept through leaflets, tours, road shows at various target cities.
The Peoples’ Ombudsman will be launched to mark the beginning of a paradigm shift of cultural attitudes towards poverty. It can be a media event and will have short term, midterm and long term goals.

**Concluding remarks:**
It is our view that reform of the current policies in economy and labour are required, in Japan and also the rest of the world, in order to address the impending global economic crisis. The media and advocacy groups can and must play a role in this. In Japan it takes more than just mere policy change; it would also mean a serious paradigm shift to address the affects of poverty on the socially excluded. Modernity has taken its toll and it is time to review our priorities and objectives when dealing with poverty and the less fortunate. It is perhaps not enough to use a pragmatic approach. To tackle a “once in century” economic crisis we need radical steps to halt and overcome the problems.
The Role of Media and Advocacy in a Social Inclusion Approach

slide 1

JENESYS East Asia Future Leaders Programme 2008
“Overcoming poverty through a social inclusion approach”

The Role of Media and Advocacy in a Social Inclusion Approach

Kensuke Matsueda
Latheefa Koya
Myo Tha Htet
Caleb Starrenburg

slide 2

Access to information and proper statistics

- OECD reported that 19.5 million people in Japan live below the relative poverty line.
- According to an article dated Feb 11, 2005, published in Asia Times Online entitled “Japan, land of rising poverty” by J. Simon Gittinen: “A new Japanese government survey estimates that the number of homeless families has skyrocketed. Rising 12.7 million in fiscal 2003 to the nation’s 1.28 million. This is the highest number ever recorded and represents a massive 28.1% increase from the previous survey conducted five years ago. The figures also show that the vast majority of children in these households live far below the poverty line, creating a rapidly growing underclass of impoverished families.”
- To tackle the problem, we require more and better data. Every agency of the government should provide and keep records which are accessible to the public. The government has a duty to provide this information under disclosure law. Japan’s Freedom of Information Act, the culmination of more than 20 years of lobbying by democracy activists, took effect in April 2001. All central government agencies, including the Defense Agency, are subject to the law. The purpose of the Act is to facilitate citizen oversight of government and public participation in policy making.

slide 3

Access to information and proper statistics

- There is no comprehensive policy on tackling the broad issue of poverty in Japan, particularly in light of the current global recession.
- The current welfare system is insufficient, as it disadvantages non-regular workers, as well as the homeless, disabled, elderly and single mothers.
- According to an article published recently on November 14, 2008 by Bloomberg.com entitled ‘Poverty, Pension Fears Drive Japan’s Elderly Citizens to Ceme’ by Siltan Bingham: “The government aims to cut 250 billion yen (2.3 billion) from social welfare spending in each of the five years starting 2005 as it seeks to evidence the budget by 2011. As part of this plan, the government introduced a new health insurance system that would raise premiums for some elderly patients. The initiative has stirred anxiety about pensions and health care, and Japan’s economic situation is daunting to help.”

slide 4

The People’s Ombudsman

A broad coalition representing various stakeholders to lobby and advocate for the eradication of poverty. The committee must include:
1. NGOs – service providers for homeless, refugees, DV victims
2. NGOs – rights based
3. Unions
4. Media – journalists, editors
5. Lawyers
6. Medical practitioners
7. Academics
8. Student youth groups
9. Artists
### Key Recommendations

The main recommendation sought by the People’s Ombudsman would be the following:

1. The Japanese government should agree on an official poverty indicator. This government should embark on a comprehensive programme to record poverty-related statistics, in order to better facilitate social inclusion policies.
2. Support legislative steps for tighter regulation of companies in regards to the employment of non-regular workers.
3. Support the creation of a Special Ombudsman to monitor policies to address issues of unemployment and poverty.
4. Support an increase of budget for Public Assistance, as well as tax concessions for personal and company NPO donations.
5. Support and promote ‘Mura’ community initiatives.

### Multi-Pronged Campaign

In order for the People’s Ombudsman to bring their message to the public and policy makers, they will embark on a multi-pronged campaign which would include the following:

1. An advocacy workshop for media professionals – awareness and informative skills on how to ask the “right question” on poverty issue.
2. Seeking endorsement from every election candidates (cross cutting party lines) for the 5 key recommendations of the People’s Ombudsman and also keeping a ‘report-card’ on elected members of the Parliament.
3. Creating various solidarity network with various community based organizations – organizing seminars, workshops for community leaders and activists.
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### Conclusion

- It is our view reform of the current policies in economy and labour are required, in Japan and also the rest of the world, in order to address the impending global economic crisis. The media and advocacy groups can and must play a role in this. In Japan it takes more than just mere policy change; it would also mean a serious paradigm shift to address the affects of poverty on the socially excluded.
- Modernity has taken its toll, and it is time to review our priorities and objectives when dealing with poverty and the less fortunate. It is perhaps not enough to use a pragmatic approach. To tackle a “once in century” economic crisis we need radical steps to halt and overcome the problems.

### Final Remarks

The members of this group would like express their deepest gratitude to JAPAN FOUNDATION for giving us this wonderful opportunity to be part of JENESYS East Asia Future Leaders Programme 2008. Our learning experiences and memories from this program are invaluable and unique and we will cherish it.

### Thank you!

Terima kashi!
Kyay zu!
Arigato!
**The Role of Academics and Researchers in Overcoming Poverty**

*Minati SINHA* (India)  
*Jing LI* (China)  
*Waleed ALY* (Australia)  
*Chhim CHHUN* (Cambodia)  
*Wan Teng LAI* (Malaysia)

**Introduction: a global overview of poverty**

Whatever forms poverty takes, it exhibits one common feature: poverty takes away people's rights, dignity and potential to live a fulfilling life. As much is reflected in the United Nations' definition of poverty as “a human condition characterized by the sustained or chronic deprivation of the resources, capabilities, choices, security and power necessary for the enjoyment of an adequate standard of living and other civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights.” The OECD, as the club of the developed countries, defines poverty in comparative terms: the position of being below 50 per cent of median of household equivalized income. By this definition, poverty exists in all countries and all societies, rich and poor. Therefore, poverty, at least in a relative sense, is a universal issue that needs to be addressed.

It is clear, however, that the increasingly rapid globalization that has prevailed particularly since the 1980s, has not brought an end to poverty, whether relative or absolute. While the idea of the global free market proceeds from an imperative to maximize and optimize the world's development resources, it has the potential to hurt the poor disproportionately at moments of downturn or market failure because of the poor's greater vulnerability to market forces. The current global financial crisis – which has its roots in the banking practices of the developed world, and specifically America – has quickly had its impact on the poor in developing countries, in many cases hitting them hardest. It follows that poverty as a global problem, is likely to have global roots, and will only be ameliorated by global action.

Even before the financial crisis, the latest World Bank and Asian Development Bank poverty joint report show that there are many more poor people than previously estimated. According to this report, about one third of Asia's population is extremely poor and nearly two thirds are moderately poor. Only a few Asian countries are on target to halve income poverty. For some countries lower poverty percentages camouflaged the fact that there were, in raw absolute terms, more poor people. For example, India reduced its poverty incidence from 60 per cent to 42 per cent, the absolute number of poor people actually increased from 420 to 456 million. While the region was successful in reducing the number of extremely poor people between 1981 and 2005 from 1,572 million to 903 million, there are reasons to be less optimistic. The report suggests that by 2020, the Asia-Pacific region will by no way be free of extreme poverty, unless growth is more inclusive.

**The JENESYS Program: some observations**

This JENESYS program has provided some invaluable insights into the issues surrounding the existence of and responses to poverty in Japan. We present here our major observations:

- **Low awareness of poverty issues in Japan:** Historically, Japan has justifiably enjoyed a reputation as an egalitarian country, and perhaps for this reason, casual observers have assumed that the accumulated wealth of recent decades has been generally distributed equally among Japanese citizens. Accordingly, poverty has often been less visible to the general public. This perception is reflected in the fact that official Japanese data on poverty has been relatively rare, and no definition of poverty has been adopted by the Japanese government. It is clear, however that relative poverty has been increasing since the 1980s.

- **Small NPO sector in Japan in contrast with other developed countries:** Because the government and the corporate sector have traditionally assumed major roles in taking care of most social needs of people as individuals, Japan has not historically had a strong non-government sector. Our impression is that it is principally since the Kobe city earthquake of 1995, when the government failed to respond to the disaster efficiently, that spaces opened both socially and legally
for NPOs to operate and fill the gap. However, obstacles still exist for growth of the NPO sector. Lack of public support, a complex legal environment containing several barriers, and little participation of the younger generation have all restrained the growth of the NPO sector.

- Poverty in a fragmented manner: Japanese poverty is manifested in a fragmented pattern. Urban poverty may be manifest as homelessness due to loss of employment, or may affect single mothers whose position has been precipitated by domestic violence. Similarly, it may affect the elderly living alone due to the breakdown of family bonds. This is to say nothing of rural poverty, which is in turn the product of different social dynamics. This fragmentation of poverty presents a significant challenge for policy makers charged with the job of generating convenient solutions.

Poverty in Japan: a brief diagnosis

Undoubtedly, there are many factors contributing to the increasing rates of poverty recently in Japan. It seems clear, however, that the problem is to a significant extent ideological. Japan appears to have pursued a markedly neo-liberal path in recent years that has undoubtedly precipitated considerable economic activity, but has also fundamentally changed the way in which the economy interacts with the society. Surveying the relevant socio-economic trends, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that one result has been exacerbated inequality, and a corresponding increase in relative deprivation.

To understand this, we may begin by considering the way in which the Japanese labour market has changed in recent years. The traditional model of a sole (usually male) breadwinner embarking on a lifelong relationship with his employer upon entering the workforce at a young age, is rapidly giving way to more neo-liberal alternatives. This is most clearly seen in the preference for labour market flexibility that has seen an increase in the proportion of non-regular employees, who are more at the mercy of the market than their regular counterparts. The result is a comparative lowering of wages and less favourable working conditions for these workers.

Of course, this on its own does not imply an increase in poverty, and may even suggest its opposite on the basis that a more flexible labour market facilitates increased employment. But it is in the interplay between these labour conditions and the Japanese social security system that we may discern more fully the impact of Japan's neo-liberal approach.

Consistent with neo-liberal ideology, Japan appears to have favoured a shrinking government – especially in the economic sphere. Much like the United States, it runs a high deficit while simultaneously maintaining relatively low tax rates. Meanwhile, Japan's system of social insurance privileges those in regular employment. Day labourers or those in non-regular employment are likely to encounter sometimes insurmountable difficulties in making the necessary premium payments. This excludes them from benefiting from social insurance should the need arise, and in particular from accessing the aged pension if over 65. It is true, of course, that social assistance is available for those not captured by social insurance, but the requirement that such benefits be reserved for those without any possibility for family support limits the scope of these benefits further. This social security structure assumes new importance against the abovementioned observations that regular employment is giving way to non-regular employment in Japan. The obvious consequence is that fewer and fewer Japanese citizens will be able to benefit from Japan's shrinking social security system. This is certainly in line with prevailing neo-liberal imperatives that seek to minimise the amount of welfare paid out by the state.

The danger for Japan is that these structural features are set up to deliver increased poverty in the coming years, particularly given the extremely difficult economic terrain the world currently confronts. The global financial crisis seems destined to precipitate widespread job losses. As the impending global recession cuts into company profits, employers will likely seek to diminish labour costs, either by transferring staff to lower wage positions or shedding employees. Given the current structure of Japan's social security system the consequences seem distressing and easy to project: more and more Japanese will be forced either into unemployment or non-regular employment, and outside the reach of state welfare. This will inevitably bring about an increase in homelessness, and therefore poverty in Japan. This trend has already been observed over the past decade. The global financial crisis is likely to exaggerate it further without some systemic reconsideration on the part of the Japanese government.

Socio-cultural dimensions of poverty

Globalization has some obvious benefits, many of which have been felt in Japan. However, it also carries with it the potential for the erosion of the important aspects of local cultures.

In brief, a society functions best when no one feels excluded whether it is a child or an adult, male or a female, rich or a poor, young or aged. So the norms and
regulations in society should be such that it adequately fits every section of the community. A significant aspect of overcoming poverty is the creation of a society where a young person does not feel isolated while struggling in a transitional phase of life, an unemployed need not hide and feel ashamed, while domestic violence and other root causes of poverty are acknowledged and tackled. Culture has been called “the way of life for an entire society.” It is should not be just about clothing, cuisines, behavioral pattern, religious values etc. but more about performing acts that could enrich the culture and society as well.

If getting globalized means promoting social disharmony and various kinds of discrimination then probably we just need to check what we are actually looking for. Should progress come at the cost of mental peace, social solidarity, humanity or family bonding?

Here we may consider the success of the Umaji village. The striking economic prosperity of this village was made possible, in large part by the traditional sense of community and the resilience of solidarity among the people. This, however, is precisely the kind of social fabric that is in danger of erosion in Japan's urban centres, where an increasingly mobile and flexible workforce is operating in an environment of less mutual loyalty with its employers. The result appears to be a cultural shift in Japan towards ideals of self-reliance (as opposed to shared community obligation), which in turn compromises the kind of solidarity that allowed the people of Umaji to succeed. Unfortunately, it seems the success of that village will be very difficult to replicate in the most economically active centres of Japan.

**Group recommendations: the role of academia**

The above analysis suggests a range of problems that invite significant contributions from academia. These may be summarized as follows:

1. Lack of understanding of poverty issues and a corresponding absence of data. Even where the Japanese government does collect important data, there seems to be a reluctance to release this information to researchers in the field. Meanwhile in some other developing countries, the small scale statistical data is not comprehensive enough to make critical analysis.

2. A lack of effective collaboration between activists, policy makers, media and academia in understanding and fighting against poverty.

3. Lack of commitment of the government, and an ideological orientation that may give rise to increased levels of relative deprivation in Japanese society.
### The Role of Academics and Researchers in Overcoming Poverty

#### Short Term Strategies (1-3 years)

| Data collection and generation | 1. Systematic documentation of comprehensive statistical data on poverty-related issues. Data must be widely distributed and shared with researchers/ NGO workers/ policy makers/ advocates. |
| Action Research | 2. Partnership with private sector and government for action research. Financial support from the two partners is important and the findings could be proposed to improve the situation. |
| International Linkages | 3. Create international linkages with collaboration research or international comparative studies to develop holistic overview and academic analysis on poverty issues – particularly where the problems are global in scope. |

#### Mid-Long Term Strategies (3 years and beyond)

| Research | 4. Scholars should conduct research for NGOs/ NPOs before starting a project in order to get big picture/ background of the situation and produce workable strategies. Besides, it is necessary to conduct evaluation in the implementation process and the end of the project as to track the impact of the project with NGOs/ government staffs who involved in the project. A reciprocal benefit would be that working with those on the ground will assist academics and researchers in formulating future research questions. |
| Skill/ Training | 5. Professional skill training for NGO/NPO workers in regards to research design, methods of data collection and the like. This would contribute to providing human capital source to NGOs/ NPOs for project implementation. |
| Modules | 6. Provide different approaches/ modules for NGOs/NPOs for overcoming poverty. Critical analysis of strong and weak points of different approaches is made to inform policy makers/ NGO advocates/ workers. |
| Education | 7. Education – educate, create and deliver knowledge/ awareness in connection to poverty issues to young generation, for example the youth who enter university in their early 20s. Further more, it is crucial to strengthen development studies focusing on poverty issues. |
| Gender Perspective | 8. Integrate and highlight gender perspective in poverty research. |
| Multi-pronged approaches | 9. Multi-pronged approaches - Distribute research findings to activist; recommendations are made to inform policy maker; and to reach out the larger society through inviting journalist to write up the issues in friendly reader form. |
| Media engagement | 10. Academic research becomes most relevant when communicated to the public, and the media is the most effective conduit for this. A common problem, however, is that journalists often fail to grasp academic research quickly enough to meet media deadlines, and may therefore misrepresent it. Academics, therefore, must create ongoing collaborative relationships with media organizations to facilitate the dissemination of their research as it develops. |
| Government consultation | 11. Academics have a major role to play as consultants to government, where they may provide honest and direct analysis in private, without creating publicity problems that might otherwise make governments reluctant to participate in the process of overcoming poverty. Such advice would encompass some of the broader, structural causes identified above that may inform government policy, beyond the more localized empirical data used by NGOs. |
| Researcher Database | 12. To establish and develop a database on list of researcher/scholars along with their area of research. As such, they can be easily accessed by others (government, NGOs, etc) on identified topics. |
The Role of Academics and Researchers in Overcoming Poverty

slide 1

JENESYS Group Report
Group C
Academics and Researchers
(Minati, Li Jing, Waleed, Chhim Chhun & Wan Teng)

slide 2

Structure
• Global overview
• Impressions/diagnosis
• Recommendations for researchers

slide 3

Global overview
• Poverty as loss of rights, dignity and potential to live a fulfilling life.
• A universal issue for both developed and developing countries.
• Globalization and poverty – the impact on the poor.
• Increased poverty in Asia-Pacific – more inclusive growth needed.

slide 4

Impressions
• Low awareness of poverty issues in Japan
• Small NPO sector in Japan in contrast with other developed countries
• Poverty in a fragmented manner

slide 5

Diagnosis
• Ideology – neo-liberalism
• Interaction of labor market and welfare/security system
• Socio-Cultural impact

slide 6

Recommendations
• Short-term
  – Data collection
  – Action Research
  – International Linkages
Recommendations

- Mid-Long term
  - Research
  - Skill/Training
  - Modules
  - Education
  - Gender Perspective
  - Multi-pronged approaches
  - Media engagement
  - Government consultation
  - Researcher database
Individual Reports

*The position and biography of the participants are as of January, 2009*
Individual Report

Waleed ALY (Australia)
Lecturer, Monash University

Mr. Aly received his Bachelor of Chemical Engineering and of Laws from Monash University. After working at Family Court of Australia and Maddocks Lawyers, currently he is a postgraduate student in Politics as well as a lecturer at the same institute. His research and teaching focuses on terrorism and political violence, looking especially at how they relate to issues of managing diversity, social cohesion, and multiculturalism.

An Australian Snapshot:
Poverty and Social Welfare

Australians are fortunate to live in a developed country that has enjoyed strong economic growth in recent years. For about the past decade, the economy has maintained a strong surplus, and unemployment has fallen to its lowest point in over three decades. Indeed, these were major boasting points of the recently departed Howard government.

Obviously, the arrival of the global financial crisis is radically altering that picture. Debate currently prevails about whether or not the Australian economy will descend into recession – if indeed it has not already. Unemployment is on the rise again, and the sizeable surplus of a year ago is quickly becoming a deficit. To be sure, the economic situation is not as grim as that of many other developed economies (especially the United States and Japan), but there is no doubt about the economic damage Australia has sustained.

Even so, poverty in Australia is very much a relative concept – with the possible exception of some remote indigenous communities that experience quite shocking standards of living. Australia does not maintain an official national definition of poverty, which makes its prevalence difficult to estimate. However, if, like Adam Smith, we define poverty with reference to a person’s ability to afford the goods and services considered basic in accordance with social norms, then we may identify certain indicators of Australian poverty levels:

- Around 16 per cent of Australians cannot afford to pay gas and electricity bills on time;
- About 12 per cent can only afford second-hand clothing;
- Around 20 per cent of Australians earn less than half of average weekly earnings;
- 27 per cent of Australians cannot afford a holiday.

In this respect, Australia is not dissimilar to Japan. To speak of poverty in either country is not typically to speak of people facing starvation. It is, instead, to speak of inequality. And as in Japan, to which we shall return in a moment, inequality in Australia seems to have been exacerbated in recent decades. Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics discloses that between 1968 and 2000, half the Australian population had their share of the country’s material wealth reduced. A report from the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling found that by the end of that period, the bottom 50 per cent of Australians owned some 7 per cent of the wealth.

Such developments are scarcely surprising given the political and economic path Australia pursued over that period. Particularly during the 1980s, the Australian government embraced the idea of the global free market, and opened its economy to those forces. What followed was (and is) a neo-liberal era of deregulation and privatisation. Many foundational services (banking, transport, energy, water, telecommunications) were either partially or fully privatised, in some cases leading to price rises that took a financial toll on low-income workers and the unemployed. Many workplaces were “casualised,” meaning that while official unemployment figures were low, the proportion of full-time employment was also shrinking. Accordingly, there has been a growth in the numbers of working poor who are employed, but with insufficient income to maintain their position in society.

I emphasise the dimension of inequality here, because it is a major theme in my field of research. In studying
the phenomena of social conflict and political violence, scholars have debated at length any connection they may have to poverty and inequality. While that debate continues, the work of James Gilligan and Richard Wilkinson argues compellingly for a correlation between inequality and violence in society. And while the inequality in question – particularly in the case of political violence – may be social, political and cultural rather than economic, it is clear that the financial dimensions of inequality are clearly worthy of consideration in the context of social cohesion, particularly as the world moves into economically difficult terrain.

Poverty and Social Inclusion in Japan:
Some observations

Clearly, the destinies of Australia and Japan are linked. Partly this is because so much economic interaction binds them together. As an example, Japan is presently Australia’s biggest trade partner. However, the two nations share a broader experiential connection. Both have pursued neo-liberal policies of economic globalisation in recent years, to similar effect. There are, however, substantial differences in degree. While both Japanese and Australian experiences of globalisation share certain themes, in most cases the impact on Japan has been more severe – perhaps because the transition to a global free market economy implied more radical changes in Japan’s case.

At the broadest level, this may be observed in the development of inequalities in both Japanese and Australian societies. The effect of neo-liberalism on inequality and relative poverty in Australia has been noted above, but they have been sharper in Japan’s case. OECD figures, for example, place the poverty rate of Japan at over 15 per cent of population, compared with Australia figure of around 11 per cent. This higher level of inequality may be diagnosed as a function of globalisation by consulting the range of studies consistently showing an upward trend in the Japanese poverty rate from around the 1980s.

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Japanese government's regularly stated preference was for a reduction in the size and scope of its welfare system. It is a political orientation Japan has shared in recent times with perhaps the world's quintessentially neo-liberal nation, the United States. And much as is the case across the Pacific, the result for Japan has been that unemployment brings with it very heavy social and economic consequences. Throughout this JENESYS tour, we heard frequently that joblessness in Japan very often precipitates in homelessness because of the absence of adequate safety nets for those who lose their jobs. Of course, it is true in any economy that joblessness increases the likelihood of a person descending into poverty and homelessness, but a comprehensive welfare program ameliorates such effects – at least in the short term. The clear disconnection between Japan's economic evolution and its static welfare system means that no such amelioration operates.

There are, however, other ways to cushion the impacts of globalisation. In the JENESYS program, this was most vividly illustrated by the story of Umaji-mura in the Kochi Prefecture. This small mountain village, with a population of around 1,150 and no national roads or high schools, has emerged as an economic success story over the past 5 or so years. Confronted with the reality that village life in Japan was on the verge of extinction, in 2003, Umaji declared its intention to reverse the trend, and develop an independent village. It has generated its own industries spanning agriculture, forestry and tourism. Now it exports goods for sale in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. As a result, it has managed to be the rarest of exceptions among Japan's villages: a community whose population is growing along with its economy. Umaji has become more than place. It has become a brand, attracting support from well beyond its borders.

Clearly Umaji has benefited from the ingenuity of its people and the leadership of its Mayor. But it is also clear that much of Umaji's success stems from its community solidarity. It is this social commitment to the village and its people that has led its businesses to attract and keep wealth within the community. An example of how this is manifest is in the production of Yuzu products, where local farmers are paid consistent prices for their produce, even where a fluctuating market rate might call for prices to be lowered. In this way, businesses in Umaji are prioritising the well being of their people over the narrow workings of the market.

Umaji's success, however, might point to a broader problem in (particularly urban) Japan. To judge by the meetings held during this JENESYS tour, there seems to be something of an emerging consensus among community activists, academics and politicians that the social fabric of Japan has been somewhat eroded by the processes of industrialisation and globalisation – especially in the cities. Where community consciousness was once strong and vital in Japanese society, it has been weakened by the emergence of societies organised around the rationality of the market. For example, the increasing mobility of Japan's workforce has naturally weakened loyalties to local areas. As people travel throughout the country for work, they establish fewer roots in specific areas. The net effect of a range of similar developments is that society becomes more atomised, and a logic of individualism emerges. That cultural development then provides a further barrier to equality, because it risks the creation of a social attitude that tends to be scornful of those who require financial assistance, perceiving such people as being at fault for their own predicament. Thus, the political imperative to provide safety nets for the unemployed ceases to exist.

But of course, politics and culture are dynamic, and never more so than now. Not only has the global financial crisis revealed the limits of the free market, it has made clear that very often, those who suffer are not those who are at fault. The financial catastrophe we are presently witnessing was not created by the masses who are now losing their jobs. That realisation has the potential to change the conventional social judgment on the unemployed. It becomes harder to maintain the fiction that the unemployed are simply lazy or incapable when it is obvious that many who are neither, have fallen on hard times. In a similar way we are witnessing a clear political trend away from strict neo-liberalism and towards greater government intervention to protect the wellbeing of citizens. Both Japan and Australia have passed upon large stimulus packages. And more broadly for Japan, the entry into depression has clearly highlighted the connection between unemployment and homelessness in a way that has caught the attention of the Government, who are presently exploring ways of finding shelters for the homeless. Perhaps such dire circumstances will precipitate a long-term shift in political thinking that reconciles economic policy with social welfare to some extent. That is to say, Japan may be in the process of discovering the importance of fostering greater social inclusion as a way of buffering the savage consequences of the impending global recession.

**Personal gains from JENESYS**

As a student of political science, I found that this JENESYS program had much to offer. Perhaps the most profound gain for me has been to reflect upon the interconnectedness
of global poverty. Clearly, poverty is experienced in very different ways in different parts of the world. The impoverished of India can scarcely be compared with those of Japan or Australia. But it is also true that the world's globalised interconnectedness has reached a point where poverty is rarely the simple product of purely local factors. The rapidly emerging difficulties confronting Japan at this moment in history illustrate this fact well. Its economic straits have profoundly international causes. And its vulnerability to the global financial crisis is at least partly a product of a political ideology that has pervaded through much of the developed world: neo-liberalism.

That naturally raises questions about the extent to which responses to the problem of global poverty must incorporate elements that are global in scope. Obviously, that is a difficult political matrix for nation states to resolve, and it implies the need for a considerably more integrated, international approach than the world has frequently produced.

The lesson, then, is relatively clear. Japan's difficulties with rising poverty are not Japan's alone. They are both the product and cause of global events, and in part, an ideological orientation that is presently being questioned with a fresh urgency. To observe this in action is an invaluable experience, and is only possible with the kinds of opportunity provided by the JENESYS program. It goes without saying, then, that I am eternally grateful for it.
JENESYS Tour Provides a ‘Global View’ of Poverty

Alaina Jay de VRIES (Australia)
Section Manager, Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

Ms. de Vries received her Bachelor of Laws from University of Queensland in 2004 and obtained her graduate diploma in Legal Practice from Queensland University of Technology in 2006. As part of the Indigenous Remote Service Delivery Group in the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, she is currently involved in policy formulation and implementation with the aim of improving the lives of Indigenous Australians.

Australia’s social support system
While the Australian social support system is advanced in many respects, there are still segments of the population that are being left behind while the majority progresses. Homelessness, mental health, disability employment and ‘children at risk’ are therefore key social inclusion priorities for the Australian Government. In addition, the Australian Government has set itself a conscientious target to ‘close the gap’ in life expectancy and other outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

Nowhere is this gap more evident than in remote communities. There is generally limited access to services such as schools and healthcare, which leads to lower health, education and employment outcomes. Children are at a greater risk of abuse and neglect, living in houses that are often sub-standard and overcrowded.

In the Northern Territory, the recent Little Children are Sacred report highlighted the link between ‘overcrowding and massive exposure to substance abuse and household violence – not to mention sexual abuse and other violence directed against children'. The Australian Government has committed significant new investment to remote Indigenous housing, with reformed delivery arrangements so that housing lasts longer and is managed appropriately.

A pre-condition of better housing is secure long-term tenure of the underlying land. My work centers on negotiating lease agreements to secure new investment on Indigenous land. Without this security, ownership of assets is uncertain, responsibilities for management and maintenance confused, and incentives for private investment absent.

Australia’s welfare system is funded from general revenue, and includes safety-net payments for those unable to work, while at the same time focusing on job readiness and strategies to encourage flexible workforce participation. The system also includes support for victims of domestic violence, financial assistance for families, supported accommodation for the homeless and universal health care. A challenge for policy makers is how to ensure that Indigenous Australians, whether in remote or urban areas, are assisted to take equal advantage of such services.

Reflections on the Japanese social support system
The most significant difference between the Australian and Japanese social support systems is that Japan operates on a social insurance system, which is largely based on corporations and the concept of ‘lifetime employment’. It is clear that this was once an effective system, as evidenced by Japan’s rapid development after World War II as it became the second largest economy in the world. The resulting affluence of the vast majority of the population seems to have greatly affected the psyche of the average Japanese citizen. During the JENESYS tour we frequently heard that there is a general impression that Japan is a wholly middle-class society, and that there is no one living in poverty.

However, we began to see otherwise. From the people we spoke to and the organizations we visited, it became evident that cracks in Japan’s social fabric have started to appear. The need to stay competitive in an international economy has led to an increase in demand for a competitive, flexible workforce. As a result, casual workers are on the increase, but the structure of Japan’s welfare system has not adapted to accommodate this change. Casual workers have
limited access to the benefits enjoyed by full-time workers, and have very little job security. Homelessness is on the increase. The opportunity to talk with a few homeless men at Kotobuki-Cho left a lasting impression on me. It was striking to hear how joblessness almost inevitably leads to marital breakdown and often to homelessness. This is partly due to the structure of the social insurance system but also the shame attached to being reliant on government money – many would actually prefer homelessness to this loss of pride. In any event, there is only a minimal government-funded safety net for the unemployed, and this can be very difficult to qualify for.

The longstanding perception that there is no problem with poverty in Japan has left the not-for-profit sector quite underdeveloped, and the broader portion of Japanese society appears largely unsympathetic toward the socially marginalized. However, this perception may be starting to shift. During our stay, we heard the news that Sony was laying off 800 workers in an effort to cut costs in these difficult financial times. We also learnt that this was not an isolated incident. We were taken to visit a few pioneering organizations that are helping the increasing numbers of unemployed, homeless people that are just starting to become visible on the streets of Tokyo. We met Charles McJilton, who established the very first food bank in Japan to redistribute food to the community that would otherwise go to waste. We also visited the Moyai Independent Life Support Centre, which assists victims of domestic violence access housing as well as other support services that are otherwise unavailable in Japan.

While the situation in Japan does not reflect anything like the poverty seen in some other countries in the East Asia region, it does appear that some fundamental problems have begun to emerge and yet the social framework is not well positioned to address them. Action should be taken now in order to give Japanese society the best chance of resiliency during these globally turbulent economic times. During the course of my stay in Japan, I made three broad observations of some target areas for reform:

1. **Dual wealth redistribution systems**
   The current system involves a social insurance system administered by one government department, and a general revenue funded safety net administered by a different department. The costs of administering these two systems could be significantly reduced by one streamlined system. For example, a progressive tax system, with support for those who cannot work, paid out of general revenue.

2. **Cultural attitudes toward societal issues**
   There appears to be limited awareness of the causes and prevalence of social issues such as domestic violence and homelessness. The government should work to begin to shift perceptions and remove the stigma currently attached to such issues. Media campaigns could be one such avenue for creating this shift.

3. **Erosion of family support structures**
   An aging population and low birth rate has led to the erosion of traditional family support structures, so that the aged and unemployed are increasingly vulnerable and at the mercy of corporations which dictate working conditions. Industrial reform should be pursued. Widespread change is required to put in place minimum standards for casual workers and to ensure access to appropriate health and other services.

**Key messages**

The JENESYS program provided me with a unique opportunity to examine the issue of poverty from a global perspective. While the participants were from vastly different countries in terms of political and social systems, it was possible to detect common themes and issues facing us all. In this time of global economic downturn it was timely to examine the preparedness of our social support systems and what steps might be taken to improve outcomes for the socially excluded.

The mix of participants’ backgrounds added an important dimension to the program. It allowed me to reflect on the importance of government policy areas establishing and maintaining links with academics and researchers so that evidence can be drawn on quickly to support the development of effective government policy.

The program left me with a sense of the importance of social support structures. The individualism so fervently pursued by Japanese society in efforts to compete in the global market seems to have significantly eroded the sense of ‘community.’ The take home message for me was that we should not pursue development at the expense of community, because when markets fail, and they will, there needs to be family and community support to prevent people from withdrawing from society.

The Australian Government has set itself a conscientious target: to ‘Close the Gap’ in life expectancy, health and other outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. ‘Outcomes’, such as numbers of new houses for example, are of course important in measuring progress toward this goal, but this program gave me the opportunity to reflect on the importance of
the ‘inputs’ – the individuals and communities themselves. Their participation in the process is equally important.

Mr. Kunihiko Kabe from the Kamonohashi Project shared his experience of establishing an enterprise in Cambodia to promote economic development for families in communities whose desperation is often preyed on by child traffickers. He emphasized the importance of ‘eating, talking and dancing together’ with the local people to ensure that you really understand where people are coming from before stepping in and trying to help. Not only did his early efforts to implement a program fail, but also he shared how the local people actually questioned his motivations. He learnt that one must ‘learn first, then do’.

It rang true that our haste to help could be perceived as ‘disapproval’ of the way people are currently living. It is arguable that in relation to Indigenous Affairs in Australia, government policies have been driven by guilt – a desire to ensure that Indigenous Australians enjoy the same standard of living as other Australians. While a noble aspiration, this is really the final step. The first step is to truly understand the problems, and for governments and non-government organizations to focus on empowering local people and working with them to change their situation. The individual must regard self identify as disadvantaged and recognize their right to assistance before their situation can be effectively changed.

This analysis gives added context to my work in FaHCSIA negotiating lease agreements with traditional landowners, focusing me on the importance of investing in understanding and ownership of reforms.
INTRODUCTION
According to the 2005 Human Development Report, Brunei is ranked 33rd out of 177 countries studied in terms of their human development index (HDI). This means Bruneians live longer, are healthier, are better educated and have a higher standard of living compared to billions of people residing in 144 other countries. Some “missing data” account as to why there is no report on the human poverty index of Brunei.

However, poverty in Brunei is defined to be not extreme and still under control of the government. Poverty exists among elderly who live alone or have been abandoned by their family and unable to take care of themselves. There are no homeless or beggars on the street but some poor and destitute people own houses, which are in bad and poor condition. Poverty also exists among divorced or widowed women with dependent children. Most of them are unemployed and need welfare aid for the daily needs of the family.

Besides that, some elderly widows depend on the welfare support for the children they stay with and some need welfare aid because they do not want to put more burdens on their children. There are also employed husbands whose incomes do not meet the needs of the family with large number of dependents.

The government of Brunei Darussalam is working hard in combating poverty from getting worse. Even though the population of Brunei is small compared with other countries (with the population estimated at almost 400,000 people), Brunei is not excluded in arranging actions for combating poverty. This is in accordance to Brunei’s National Vision 2035 and eradicating poverty and hunger by 2015, as envisioned by the UN Millennium Development Goals – to provide a social security strategy that ensures that as the nation prospers, all citizens are properly cared for. Strategies are prepared in all aspects in reducing poverty such as in terms of awareness, joint programmes and so on. This is also in response to the Titah of His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu’izzaddin Waddaulah, the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam, in conjunction with the celebration of Hijrah 1430 Islamic New Year, to see the poverty in Brunei becomes zero.

In Brunei Darussalam, there are ministries and departments responsible for the poverty issue. Ministries like the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Ministry of Home Affairs and departments such the Community Development Department and the Youth and Sports Department are providing welfare aid for the poor and destitute people in managing the poverty in Brunei.
heads of families and 12,258 that are still under the care of Islamic Religious Council, Ministry of Religious Affairs.

As a youth worker and a government servant under Youth and Sports Department, I am responsible for handling the youth affairs socially and economically. My tasks are to prepare youth programmes for their free time; leadership and skills programmes and to get them involved and mingle with society as part of the needs of living. In order to enhance youth's interests and awareness towards the society's needs, my task is to create community work programmes to encourage youth involvement in community work. The programme is to make the youth realise what is going on in the society and help them to become aware of the existence of poverty in Brunei.

The Youth and Sports Department is introducing a community work programme called the 'KAMAS Programme' to expose the youth to the society. The programme is also to raise awareness of the people in Brunei, especially the youth, that poverty does exist in Brunei and it needs everyone to take action in combating the problem. The aims of the KAMAS programme are to enhance the awareness among the youth as an exposure towards the needy people in the society; and to inculcate amongst the youth the spirit of volunteerism and caring to enhance living in a society as a whole.

PERSONAL REFLECTION / OBSERVATION

My participation as Brunei's representative in the JENESYS East Asia Future Leaders Programme "Overcoming Poverty through a Social Inclusion Approach: The Status quo of Asia and Oceania in a Globalised Economy" organised by The Japan Foundation was very fruitful and useful in helping me to work out more programmes on poverty to be conducted in Brunei. The activities prepared in this programme are very beneficial for the participants not only as a need for the programme itself, but it also enhances the networking and cooperation amongst the participants.

The group's discussions helped me to understand more about poverty in different countries and different actions enforced by the countries in combating poverty. The discussion required us to communicate and share our views and ideas on poverty. As for myself, I was put in the "Government Group' to discuss 'The Role of Government in Overcoming Poverty'.

Since the programme had participants from different countries, the participants of this programme got a chance to broaden their networking. Furthermore, besides discussing poverty and the solutions enforced by each country in combating poverty, the participants were also able to learn about different cultures and ways of life in different countries.

Institutional visits that were arranged were very relevant to the topic of this programme and suitable, but due to the time constraint, I was only able to get limited details on some of the venues. Apart from the venues being very interesting, I was also able to interact with the local people and to have the opportunity to try making traditional crafts and wearing the traditional costume.

During the individual research – the time when the participants were allowed to do their research according to the topic given by groups – I took the opportunity to wander around the Akihabara Electronic District for sightseeing. Here, I was able to capture some pictures on the poverty that exists in Japan, similar to our visit in Kotobuki-cho one of the skid row/dose house areas of Japan. This was a new experience for me that I do not see in my country. The experience at least gives me the thought that there are unfortunate people that are forced to live on the street because of poverty faced by the certain country.
RECOMMENDATIONS

JENESYS East Asia Future Leaders Programme indeed is a good programme and should be shared by a maximum number of participants. Therefore, I would like to recommend that the organiser will allow two participants from each participating country to give more of an opportunity for the participants to gain and share their opinions on the topic given in the programme.

On the other hand, I would also like to suggest that the organiser organise such programmes but on different topics such as the morale and cultures that have been forgotten by the youth, for example in respect the elderly etc. Youth inclusion should be enforced and focused more in the future programmes to allow the youth participation.

TENTATIVE PERSONAL ACTION PLAN

In continuation of this programme, I have come up with a tentative project proposal with topic “Raising Youth’s Awareness Towards Poverty”. In brief, it is an awareness programme that focuses on the youth participation towards poverty. The programme is suggested to take place in August 2009 and financed by the Youth and Sports Department, Brunei Darussalam as the organiser and The Japan Foundation as the financial supporter (will be requested). The programme will include activities such as lectures and working group sessions, presentations from respective countries, institutional visits, community work, and interaction.

CONCLUSION

From my experience as a participant in this JENESYS programme, I found that this is a good way to discuss the global issue being encountered by developed and developing countries. The experience and knowledge gained in this programme will help me to empower youth inclusion in combating poverty by firstly raising their awareness and interests. I hope that this programme will be organised again in the future in order to achieve its objectives.
“Poverty is Everywhere”

Chhim CHHUN (Cambodia)
Research assistant in Poverty, Agriculture and Rural Development (PARD) unit, Cambodia Development Resource Institute (CDRI)

Mr. Chhun received his Bachelor degree in rural development from Royal University of Economics and Law in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. After working at Cambodian Researchers for Development (CRD) and DataCam (Data Research, Analysis and Consultancy Services in Cambodia), he has been working at Cambodia Development Resource Institute (CDRI) since 2008 and currently involving in two research projects: Poverty Dynamics Study and Youth Situation Analysis.

Very brief poverty situation and social welfare

Cambodia is a country located in South East Asia with an area of 181,035 km². The total estimated population in Cambodia was about 13.4 million in 2008, with an annual increase of 1.52 percent. Females - being 51.5 percent of the population - are slightly predominant.

The poverty level for 2004 is estimated to have been 35 percent; that is, 35 percent of the Cambodian population is estimated to have been living under the national poverty line that year (Cambodia Riel 2,124=0.531US$). In other words, one in five Cambodians lived under the food poverty line. Poverty was considerably higher in rural areas (39 percent) than urban areas (5 percent in Phnom Penh and 25 percent in other urban areas). Poor households have a higher dependency burden and lack human capital; they tend to be uneducated, unskilled, and unhealthy. The poor and in particular the extreme poor are concentrated in rural remote areas, with limited access to roads, markets, and basic services. They also lack secure land tenure and access to irrigation facilities (Cambodia poverty profile 2004).

To reduce poverty, the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) in partnership with NGOs and UN agencies, has created many programs. RGC is committed to reducing poverty by 1% every year. UN agencies also support the government in poverty reduction. There are more than one thousand local and international NGOs working in Cambodia,

Below are some brief examples of social protections provided by government and NGOs 1:

- Pensions: The RGC pays a pension to an extensive number of its retired civil servants, military, police, disabled people and dependents of soldiers and military heroes. However these amounts of payment do not meet a daily living standard. The private sector, donors and NGOs also offer pensions to their employees.

- Food and Housing Assistance: Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth (MoSVY) and the National Committee for Disaster Management (NCDM) are responsible for helping the poor or people who got the disaster by delivering this assistance. The Cambodia Red Cross and the Royal Palace also helps in this assistance.

- Social Land Concession: The Royal Government of Cambodia has created programs to help poor families by transferring state land to poor people for family farming and residential purposes.

- Education: In relation to this issue, the Royal Government of Cambodia does not charge school fees for all students around the country from grade 1 to grade 12, the 1st year to 12th year of schooling. Furthermore, the RGC also created programs to support poor students to continue their studies by providing scholarships.

- Health: Government, NGOs, and UN agencies have supported patients of diseases such as Tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS as well as maternal and child health.

Linkage with my current job

I am working with a research institute that addresses many issues including poverty, so the topic of overcoming poverty is very important for my career. Our institute’s mission is to contribute to Cambodia’s sustainable development and the well being of the people through the

1 ADB 2007, Cambodia Social Protection Index
generation of high quality policy-relevant development research and knowledge dissemination. The institute conducts research to document issues, finds solutions and develops recommendations for the government in order to improve our society.

**Observations and recommendations towards poverty issues and the social inclusion approach in Japan**

Japan is the world’s second largest economy, but poor people and homeless are also present in this country. From my trip of December 9th to 19th 2008 with the JENESYS program, I have some observations and recommendations as follows:

- **Not enough from the Japanese government on poverty:** Japan is a rich country, so poverty may not be so important; they just think about the major issues for developing their country. Therefore, in relation to poverty, the government does not seem to care. Poor people continue living with what they have. We have seen jobless and homeless people living on the street or any public place. As a rich country, the Japanese government should take action like creating centers for the homeless or working as partners with NPOs to solve this issue. Some NPO such as Moyai for example, have more experience and can help.

- **NPO environment is small:** There are not many NPOs in Japan. In developing countries, NPOs are important in filling the gap when the government is not capable. The government of Japan should support communities in creating community-based organizations to solve the problems when doing so would be more effective and more flexible than intervention from government.

- **Lack of data on poverty:** To reduce poverty, data is very important in a development program. Japan has good systems in various areas such as road and governmental administration, so it should be very easy to have data on poverty. The government should collect and allow the public to access the data.

- **Poverty is present in cities, but not in the rural areas.** People living in cities are very competitive, so they easy to fall into poverty if the economic situation is not good. While I was attending the JENESYS program for example, some corporations in Japan had to cut back on their staff because of their financial crisis. In my opinion, the Japanese government should mobilize the poor from cities to rural areas because in the rural areas there are plenty of natural resources and agricultural land that can rescue them in worst situations.

**Gaining from JENESYS- Overcoming poverty program 2008**

Joining the program provided a great opportunity for me. I think it was very good because I made friends from many countries in the region and learnt more about the poverty situations of each country. Now I know that poverty is not only a Cambodian problem but also a problem in other countries, even in Japan, the second largest economy in the world.

There are many things that I learned and gained from my trip with the JENESYS program. From place to place, the lecturer provided us with information on poverty, what they are doing and methods or styles that they are implementing to help the poor, for example Moyai, the Kamonohashi Project, Second Harvest Organization and so on.

I was able to bring much knowledge back to my home country. As I am working in research institute, I will share my experiences gained in Japan with my colleagues and others in Cambodian academia.
An Eye Opening Trip

Jing LI (China)
Strategic Planning Advisor, School of Social Development and Public Policy at Beijing Normal University

Mr. Li Jing received his Bachelor of Engineering from Shanghai Jiaotong University in 1991, Master of Arts in Political Science from Peking University in 1998, and Master of Public Policy in International Development from Harvard University in 2000. After working at Plan International and United Nations Development Programme, he worked briefly at School of Social Development and Public Policy at Beijing Normal University as Strategic Planning Advisor. He is now the Executive Director of Beijing Vantone Foundation.

1) Brief introduction to poverty situation and social welfare that are related to your work.

In the past 3 decades, China has seen rapid economic growth and has become the world's third biggest economy. Although poverty has been fought continuously in the past 30 years with achievements that are appreciated worldwide, a new type of poverty has also occurred since early this century as follows:

• The speed of poverty eradication has slowed down in the rural area. Extreme population figures have remained unchanged for the past couple of years.
• Disparities within the urban areas have become more and more prominent. While a small number of people are making fortunes through certain legal or illegitimate ways, there also exist a large number of low-income citizens who depend on social assistance to live on.
• The gap between the rural and urban area is also growing. The value of China's Gini Coefficients has hit a dangerously high record of .47. Large numbers of migrant workers working in the urban area not only are earning a very modest income, but also at the same time are valuable due to lack of access to a social security system.

Since I graduated from the Harvard Kennedy School in the year 2000, I have returned to China and have been working on poverty alleviation and human rights issues for 8 years. I worked first with Plan International – a global NGO working on the betterment of children's rights. During those 5 years, I worked extensively with rural citizens on child centered community development. Participatory approach is central to the success of Plan's programs. In 2005, I moved on and joined the UNDP China Office. I worked on human rights, rule of law, civil society development and other governance related issues, which contribute to the root causes of poverty. In both positions, I observed how both rural and urban poverty deprive people from their rights and how poverty can be addressed through participatory and inclusive approaches. I was also awakened to their limitations.

This is the Japan–East Asia Network of Exchange for Students and Youths (JENESYS) Program, which focuses on poverty and social inclusion. In this program, Japan is taken as a case study. Discussions are held to contemplate what each country, local government, NPO, socially vulnerable, and average citizens can do to tackle these issues. Learning about what kind of cooperation could be possible as an Asia/Oceania region as a whole in this globalizing economy, is a great opportunity for me.

2) Personal observations and recommendations of the poverty issues and social inclusion approach in Japan.

My expectations were in fact more than fully met during the 10-day well-structured and organized program. I deem it as an eye-opening trip, through which I gained lots of invaluable insights that I would otherwise never have been able to obtain without coming to visit Japan in person. My major observation surrounding the existence of and responses to poverty in Japan as an academia, would include the following:

• Low awareness of poverty issues in Japan: Historically, Japan has justifiably enjoyed a reputation as an egalitarian country. Perhaps for this reason, casual
observers have assumed that the accumulated wealth of recent decades has been generally distributed equally among Japanese citizens. Accordingly, poverty has often been less visible to the public. This perception is reflected in the fact that official Japanese data on poverty has been relatively rare and the Japanese government has adopted no definition of poverty. It is clear, however, that relative poverty has been increasing since the 1980s.

- **Small NPO sector in Japan in contrast with other developed countries:** Because local government and corporate sectors have traditionally assumed major roles in taking care of most social needs of people as individuals, Japan has not historically had a strong non-government sector. Our impression is that it is principally since the Kobe city earthquake of 1992, when the government failed to respond to the disaster efficiently, that spaces opened both socially and legally for NPOs to operate and fill the gap. However, obstacles still exist for the NPO sector to grow. Lack of public support, a complex legal environment containing several barriers, and little participation from the younger generation have all restrained the growth of the NPO sector.

- **Poverty in a fragmented manner:** Japanese poverty is manifested in a fragmented pattern. Urban poverty may be demonstrated as homelessness due to loss of employment, or may affect single mothers whose positions have been precipitated by domestic violence. Similarly, it may affect the elderly living alone due to the breakdown of family bonds. This is to say nothing of rural poverty, which is in turn the product of different social dynamics. This fragmentation of poverty presents a significant challenge for policy makers charged with the job of generating convenient solutions.

In terms of possible recommendations of how to address poverty issues in Japan, my main suggestion would be for the academia to be more engaged in research and actions toward solutions to poverty issues in Japan. To be more specific, the academia should initiate the following:

- **Researcher Database:** to establish and develop a database of researcher/scholars along with their area of research so that they can easily be accessed by others (government, NGOs, etc) on identified topics.

- **Data collection and generation:** systematic documentation of comprehensive statistical data that on poverty-related issues. Data must be widely distributed and shared with researchers/ NGO workers/ policy makers/ advocates.

- **Action Research:** partnership with the private sector and government for action research. Financial support from the two partners is important and the findings could be proposed to improve the situation.

- **International Linkages:** create international linkages with collaboration research or international comparative studies to develop holistic overviews and academic analyses on poverty issues – particularly where the problems are global in scope.

- **Research:** scholars should conduct research for NGOs/ NPOs before starting a project in order to get big picture/ background of the situation and produce workable strategies. Besides, it is necessary to evaluate the implementation process and the end of the project in order to track the impact of the project with NGOs and government staff involved in the project. A reciprocal benefit would be that working with those in the field would assist academics and researchers in formulating future research questions.

- **Skill Enhancement/Training:** professional skill training for NGO/ NPO workers in regards to research design, methods of data collection and the like. This would contribute to providing human capital resources to NGOs/NPOs for project implementation.

- **Education:** educate, create and deliver knowledge/ awareness on poverty issues to the young generation, for example youth who enter university in their early 20s. Furthermore, it is crucial to strengthen development studies focusing on poverty issues.

- **Government Consultation:** academics have a major role to play as government consultants, where they may provide honest and direct analysis in private, without creating publicity problems that might otherwise make governments reluctant to participate in the process of overcoming poverty. Such advice would encompass some of the broader, structural causes identified above that may inform government policy, beyond the more localized empirical data used by NGOs.

### 3) What you have gained and have taken home through participating in this program.

I must say, this trip to Japan has taught me some valuable lessons. This program has particularly led me to think and study about how Japan, one of the richest countries in the world, has failed to continue its growth and to protect the rights of all. Manifestations of poverty in Japan, such as the unemployed elderly living in shabby homes; long lines at the free food fair; and huge pressures for the youth to secure jobs, can be quite enlightening lessons in light that
China has been on its fast track to growth for more than 15 years and is now encountering a major setback. I will try to introduce such lessons to the academic community in China and recommend taking Japan as a case in study for public policy and social development, so that attention to the vulnerable and a socially inclusive approach to poverty reduction can be reflected in the academic thinking and curriculum design in these areas.
Poverty and its Manifestations

Minati SINHA (India)
Research Scholar, Indian Institute of Technology Delhi, India

Ms. Sinha received her Bachelor in Economics from Guwahati University, Assam in 1999, Masters in Sociology from Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi, in 2002, and Master of Philosophy in Psychiatric Social Work form Central Institute of Psychiatry, Kanke, Ranchi, Jharkhand in 2005. She also has more than 5 years of professional experience in the social development sector with extensive work. Currently she is pursuing her Ph.D at IIT Delhi, Department of Humanities and Social Science, India.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines poverty as: The condition of having little or no material possessions; indigence, destitution, want, and suggests its first use was in 1075 AD. Recently, the perspective of poor people has recognized that poverty involves a wider set of deprivations, vulnerability and exclusion from society, in addition to material destitution.

Faces of poverty are different in different countries, depending on factors like level of income and consumption, social indicators and socio-political access. The margin of difference is very wide between the developed and developing countries e.g. the set of questions asked to deprived people in order to assess deprivation rates. In Japan, this includes the availability of micro-wave ovens, heaters/coolers (air conditioners), hot water heaters (for kitchen and wash basin) etc. but they are considered extreme luxury items for any third world country. In complete contrast to Japan, the Indian population, the second highest population of the world with the highest poverty rate, the items mentioned above to assess deprivation in Japan have never been heard of by the poor people and sometimes not even by the lower middle class population. The poor people in India are found in alarming slum population. The increasing rate of beggars’ suffering due to malnutrition, starvation, etc. is because they are deprived of almost every basic need, like electricity, proper sanitation, safe drinking water, shelter, clothing education and struggling even to arrange for their daily meals to survive.

To further prove the wide margin, it could be mentioned here that the total population suffering from poverty in Japan is approximately 17,000. Whereas, in India we have two sections of people living below the poverty line (BPL)\(^1\) i.e., rural and urban poor\(^2\) and their respective population is estimated at 170.3 million in rural areas and 68.2 million in urban areas - out of the over one billion population. One major difference is also found in the type of people suffering. In India, poverty is faced by families at large facing every problem in unison and the culture in India is such that the poorest of the poor also have a family of his/her own. Whereas in Japan, the number of people suffering from poverty are fragmented & isolated without a family of his/her own. Poor people in Japan are in just three categories of unprivileged people of the society: the old, single women and a few young people. If we go by both count and type of poor people in these two countries there is no comparison. So variations of such degree do not have a common solution. Though the term poverty is a universal concept, it cannot be dealt with a universal strategy.

The term POVERTY sounds quite inappropriate for the current crises faced by some sections of people in the Japanese society going beyond terms like absolute or

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What is Poverty?
It is all about being deprived of adequate food, shelter, medical care, education, employment etc. that is the basic requirement to maintain a certain standard of life.

Who is a poor?
A person whose income level is below the minimum level necessary to meet basic needs, which also decides the poverty line.

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1 “On 1999-2000 prices, the poverty line at all-India level is Rs 327.56 and Rs 454.11 for rural and urban people per capita per month respectively,”

2 National Sample Survey (NSS) report 1999-2000, the number of people living below the poverty line was estimated at 170.3 million in rural areas and 68.2 million in urban areas - out of the over one billion population.
Poverty and its Manifestations

Poverty is a more specified term used for a certain group of people sharing a similar level of socio-economic crises in a society, which could be measured by using a common scale of minimum needs required for maintaining a certain standard of living. The kind of poor people in Japan could be just addressed as some individuals being socially excluded or relatively deprived of certain necessities at various stages of life due to varied reason. As being discussed\(^3\), it is very difficult to solve these crises as it is not clearly visible, but at the same time, it could also be assumed that it is not visible because it is not so grim. When socially derogatory things are not visible they are still considered manageable because no human being finds pleasure in revealing their helplessness.

The three distinct sections of the Japanese population i.e., some elderly people, single women and youth who are tagged to be poor people of Japan, are basically suffering because of each other. This is a vicious circle where some youths being deprived of certain necessities grow up to be confused adults lacking in confidence to lead a family. After becoming adults, they either remain as single males or have to take shelter in dose houses in their old age. If they are ever married, their inability to carry relationships with dignity, gradually leads to divorce and consequently single mothers. Then again, the process is repeated as single mothers have to look after their children and themselves with a limited source of income without a husband or a father for the children to rely on. They find it difficult to meet the basic needs of the children who grow up to be vulnerable youths and so on... Considering this, it would be really difficult to decide on a poverty line for these deprived sections of the Japanese population as their minimum basic needs are not the same.

"Poverty is really the lack of freedom to have or to do basic things that you value," said Amartya Sen, the Nobel laureate in economics from India. If this is taken as the standard definition of poverty, then undoubtedly Japan is facing poverty.

The key concepts of Japanese poverty could be discussed in further detail:

- **Feminized poverty** - one basic thing that is common among the most developed and the most underdeveloped countries of the world is that, the woman has to suffer the maximum burden of poverty. Feminization of poverty is more serious an issue than poverty as a whole. To be more focused, women need to be fully empowered with proper exposure to education and equal job opportunities as men. A strong woman rears strong youths, strong youths grow up to be confident adults and hence a secured old age.

- **Youth poverty** - Youth poverty\(^4\) is also a term that has recently gained attention as a significant issue to be taken care of and is not unique to Japan. It is a growing global problem. Youth poverty usually is an outcome of childhood deprivation and parental poverty and is mostly inherited. Youth poverty basically occurs because of three major social problems i.e., inter-group conflict, the quest for status and identity, and primitive and rejecting social climate. Youth poverty is found in every country, as the need of the youth is related not only to financial security but social security as well. Youth poverty cannot be solved without securing childhood through proper family involvement or parental care along with adequate education.

- **Poverty and old age** - Old age and poverty come as a social package of vulnerability for almost every nation. This could be considered as an outcome of the mechanized life and an extreme impact of growing globalization. The elderly people are poor because society has created such circumstances where they are forced to be isolated after being abandoned by their families. For instance, without a job means without dignity, considered a spare part of the society, and an unwanted member of the family. Being retired / growing old means that someone with best of experience, a treasure for the society and an honor to the family, suddenly takes a u-turn.

Though growing globalization has proved to be quite beneficial for economic growth; it has come up with a few social disadvantages as well. It has widened the gap between the rich and the poor, has made people mechanized, money has replaced culture and all these changes have had a direct impact on the young generation (Young people, when referred to as such, are those between 10-24 years of age. They are no longer children, but not yet adults\(^5\) who are facing this abrupt shift without enjoying any of its benefits as obvious from a recent report, that 70% of Indian youth are clueless to what globalization is all about\(^6\). Unfortunately, nearly half of the world’s population does not share the benefits of growing global prosperity as almost 3 billion people are living in poverty.

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\(^3\) Prof. Aya Abe has mentioned in the concluding session of the JENESTYS Future Leaders Program


\(^5\) As defined by WHO

\(^6\) Released by Centre of the Studies of the Developing Societies (CSDS) on 24th Dec ‘08
and earning less than $2 a day⁷.

The youth of Japan is also struggling hard to keep in pace with the growing globalization. In this process of growing economy, all youth are not getting benefitted equally, only a few are blessed with a sound financial background or an outstanding academic background to find himself/herself a good opportunity to boost the confidence level and grow higher and higher in life. The rest of the youth who are the majority and lagging behind in any respect can never find a position of his/her own with no one to support/guide/care about how to look for alternatives in life.

My observation and recommendation:
This was my first exposure to a program of this kind as a participant and the first opportunity to represent my country (India) abroad. The JENESYS East Asia Future Leaders Programme “Overcoming Poverty through a Social Inclusion Approach: The Status quo of Asia and Oceania in a Globalised Economy” has helped me to grow as a person and has enhanced my observational skills of analyzing things from various perspectives. I have learned how knowing things from various aspects, like rough poverty outlines of countries, different faces and structures of poverty, socio-economic shades of poverty, political stands on poverty, cultural contribution to the growth of poverty; all play equally significant roles in framing poverty and its feasible solutions.

There should be conscious and honest efforts made to work for the deprived youth and assess their level of self-esteem. It is really something to worry about when in a developed country like Japan, the youth have to be a significant part of the unprivileged section of people suffering from poverty. The solution for eradicating poverty in Japan is possible through proper attention to the youths and growing adults by involving their parents, taking care of their education, job placement, and handling their emotional crises with utmost care. They being the future of a country should not be vulnerable because of any family disharmony, cultural taboos, socio-economic crises, poor function of the government, etc. Once the youths are confident enough in leading a self-reliant life, any other social problems will be taken care of mechanically and with much ease.

⁷ As mentioned in the Better World Campaign, a sister organization of the United Nations Foundation, as part of a series of papers developed for the 2008 Presidential campaign and incoming administration.
Mr. Shobirin finished his Bachelor degree at Bandung School of Social Welfare in 1996 and received his Master of Social Welfare Science from University of Indonesia in 2004. As a head of Sub Division of Non Government Organization Cooperation at Ministry of Social Affairs, he is organizing meetings of International NGO (INGO), local organizations, and local government, as well as arranging and facilitating social welfare and development programs/activities.

A. Poverty Condition in Indonesia and The Eradication Process

I. Introduction

The Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia is the world's largest Archipelagic State consisting of 17,504 islands (including 9,634 unnamed and 6,000 uninhabited islands). Indonesia has 3 of world's biggest islands, Kalimantan (the 3rd biggest island in the world with 39,460 km$^2$), Sumatera (473,606 km$^2$) and Papua (421,981 km$^2$). Indonesia is a republic and Indonesia's national motto, “Bhinneka tunggal ika” (“Unity in Diversity” literally, “many, yet one”), articulates the diversity that shapes the country.

The latest data shows that Indonesia's population is estimated at around 237 million. The number of women is higher than the number of men. About 60 % of Indonesian people live on Java Island, which only covers 7% out of the total area of Indonesia. As a developing Country, Indonesia is face to face with various problems such as criminality, neglected children, over-exploitation of natural resources, horizontal conflict, corruption and so forth. Geographically, Indonesia is an archipelago situated at a juncture of four tectonic plates; the Asian Plate, the Australian Plate, the Indian Ocean Plate and the Pacific Ocean Plate. As a result, Indonesia is not only prone to man-made problems, but also to natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and landslides. In addition, the economic crisis has also heightened the number of people living in poverty.

The latest data shows that the number of poor is around 34, 96 million or around 15.9 % of the total population. This calculation is based on the World Bank's standard, which affirms that those who earn less than 1 US dollar a day are categorized as poor people. However, many observers, social workers, academicians, and opposition party members of the parliament state that the actual number of poor is much greater than that stated in the Government data.

Aside from the confronting problems stated above, Indonesia is a Country richly endowed with natural resources such as petroleum, forest crops, fertile soils, marine resources and so forth. Indonesia is the world's leading liquid gas producer (around 20% of the world's supply) and the second biggest tin producer. Indonesia is at the top in agriculture with cloves and nutmeg production, and second to top in the production of natural rubber and crude palm oil. Aside from natural resources, Indonesian people still highly cherish the spirit of togetherness in living, especially those who live in rural areas. This kind of tradition can be a significant power to build Indonesia in a better way.

The history of poverty eradication in Indonesia

In the history of this republic, poverty eradication programs have been executed in various ways. Based on presidential classification, the programs can be classified as follows,

a. During the Soekarno's leadership, there was a well-known poverty eradication program called the National Plan, which ran for eight years.

b. During Soeharto's leadership, the following poverty eradication programs were implemented: (1) The Presidential Instruction Program for Undeveloped Villages, (2) the Prosperous Family Development Program; (3) the Social Welfare Program; (4) Prosperous Family Savings; (5) Prosperous Family Business Loans; (6) the National Foster Parent Action Plan; and
(7) Agricultural Credit for Farmers.
c. During Habibie’s leadership, the programs were:
(1) The Social Security Network; (2) the Poverty Eradication Program for Urban Areas; (3) the Facility Development Program for Under-developed Rural Areas; and (4) the District Development Program. During Abdurrahman Wahid’s Presidency, the Social Security Network and Poverty Eradication Program for Urban Areas were still implemented, accompanied with the new program called the Food Resilience Program.
d. During her presidency, Megawati Soekarnoputri decided to continue the Poverty Eradication Program for Urban Areas and established a new program called the Poverty Eradication Committee.
e. President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono has implemented 5 eradication programs: (1) A Coordination Team for Poverty Eradication; (2) Unconditional Cash Assistance; (3) the District Development Program; (4) the Poverty Eradication Program for Urban Areas; and (5) the National Program for People’s Empowerment.

From the illustration explained above, it can be concluded that the phenomenon of poverty in Indonesia has lasted over the years alongside the various efforts to eliminate it.

Poverty Eradication and Its Relation to My Job
I have been working at the Department of Social Affairs in Indonesia, since I graduated from the Bandung School of Social Welfare in 1997. In Indonesia, there are a number of departments responsible for handling poverty, but the Department of Social Affairs is the central-leading institution among the departments. As a department established in the early days of Indonesian Independence, or in fact, one day after Soekarno-Hatta proclaimed Indonesian Independence on August 17th, 1945, the Department of Social Affairs has implemented several programs and activities.

There is a saying, “No State can work all alone to ensure and fulfill its own long-term social welfare,” and as it is stated in the 1945 Constitution, social problems, including eradication, is not only the responsibility of the Government. It needs extra work, support and active participation from society, professionals, social organizations and private sectors to work in concert to address social welfare problem with any degree of effectiveness.

At the Department of Social Affairs, I work in a division greatly involved in the guidance and enhancement of the roles of social organizations in order to contribute to social development. At the time being, there are about 20,000 social organizations, which play active roles in raising the welfare level of Indonesian society. There are also 120 International NGOs such as World Vision, Save the Children, Care, Mercy, Austcare, etc. Such organizations are potential resources for the success of the social welfare development program, especially the poverty eradication program in Indonesia. Furthermore, with the vision and mission to serve society (by ignoring ethnic, religion, sex, and other differences), it is hoped that poverty eradication can be implemented more comprehensively and entirely.

My daily activity is to synchronize the roles of the NGOs and the Government. By setting the right rules, I believe the outcome will be that assistance is spread evenly to the poor. Moreover, through this method, despite such vast areas and far distances from one area to another, even the poor in remote areas (such as people in Papua, Kalimantan and others) will be able to receive the same assistance as those who live in big cities.

B. Field Observation of the Issue of Poverty, Social-Inclusion in Japan and Recommendations
Indonesia and Japan have much in common, especially in the history of the decline of all sectors caused by World War II, between 1942 and 1945. The strategy to eradicate poverty in Indonesia is such a long and heroic tale, which is full of ups and downs. On one side, there is a success story on the Government’s effort to eradicate poverty, but on the other, there is also a story of failure.

Actions taken by the Government of Japan can be a good example of how a Country can identify coming obstacles and arrange strategies to handle them. Japanese’s lifestyle, which highly appreciates work ethic, discipline and tolerance, has placed Japan as one the most influential countries in world, especially in terms of technology.

To visit and learn the positive values of Japan society, everything was wrapped up in one package; the Jenesys program. Joining the program was extremely worthwhile for me, to enrich and broaden my viewpoints that I am about to implement as part of my work in Indonesia.

Some points that I learned during my participation in the Jenesys program from 9 to 19 of December 2008 are as follows:

a. Strong willpower and hard efforts of the local NGO in creating supportive action programs to handle social problems in Japan.

Field visits to several NGOs, made it apparent that the issues addressed by the NGOs were not common. This means that one NGO does not tackle
Social and Cultural Approach to Eradicate Poverty

all social problems. Somehow, it is different from the situation here in Indonesia. In Indonesia, an NGO tries to intervene in many kinds of social problems. Consequently, the outcome is not as expected. There is an NGO, which not only implements a gender program but also programs for neglected and dropout children.

b. Social Solidarity and a Sense of Belonging to a Traditional Heritage

It is obvious from the maintenance and development of historical buildings and Japan’s traditional art seen at places of interest, that they are also study sites for students in Japan and foreign tourists, which in effect is economically beneficial to people who live nearby, while contributing to the state’s tax income.

c. Well-organized Work and Project

From the field visits, whether it was to NPOs, places of interest or government offices, I witnessed that Japanese always work on everything diligently, seriously and accurately. The Japanese also appreciate time; everything is scheduled and executed on time.

C. Some Major points that I Learned and am About to Implement

I learned many things during my participation in the Jenesys Program. From the beginning, before the program began, I wrote that poverty needs not only an economical approach, but also a cultural approach such as hard work, discipline, punctuality, and tolerance. What I believed was proven when I joined the Jenesys program. Japan had everything on my list.

Economically, Indonesia is far behind Japan. But I have faith that economic development is not all that is needed to eradicate poverty. What is necessary is parallelism in social and cultural development.

I need to say this because I see that in Indonesia the social and cultural approach is not yet prioritised. Education as the main key for an individual to move upward has only been recognized as being important enough to be implemented since 20 years ago. Before that, what was more important here was to maximize food production. This kind of strategy ignored investing in strong and educated human resources for Indonesia’s future. Even though both Indonesia and Japan were just freed from the man-made disaster of World War II, the early development strategies of the two countries were very different. Japan focused on investing in human resources, while Indonesia focused on agriculture.

To complete my experience, I will share what I learned in Japan, especially about the social and cultural approaches to eradicate poverty as developed by Japan, with policy makers in Indonesia. I will try my best to convince them that programs based on economic development will never be sufficient for the eradication of poverty; they should be implemented hand in hand with a cultural development approach. I will also share my experience when I lecture, including what I learned about other Japanese achievements. I hope that doing so will lead to the establishment of new styles of poverty eradication programs in Indonesia.
Working, Just to Survive

\textit{Arde Wisben} (Indonesia)
Social Worker, Social Worker Practice Resource Center

Mr. Wisben received his Bachelor of Social Scientist from School of Social Work in 2000. Since then, he has worked in many diverse groups and organizations in relation to poverty issues and its impact on people in the community. Currently, he is assisting community living in Jakarta, and developing Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction.

A. Brief report on poverty in Indonesia
Talking about poverty will not bring income or any amount money into a household at one time. Working is the best solution to earning money. One theory on poverty is that unproductive individual attitudes cause poverty. Another expert has a different opinion and says that individual adaptation in a poor environment makes her or him unproductive.

Attracted by both theories, I conducted a brief research to see the kind of work done by a low-income group. I stood on a street for 60 minutes taking pictures of people crossing the street. They appear in listed below:

1. **Oil vendors**
   They buy oil from an agent for a certain amount and sell it again to communities around the area for little profit.

2. **Vegetable vendors**
   Early morning they shop in the market to buy vegetables that are in demand. They arrange the goods along the storefront, and wait for their customers. Usually mothers prefer buying from these vendors, since they don’t have to pay transportation expenses to the market.

3. **LNG vendors**
   Usually these vendors have no specific place of business. Their only asset is an empty LNG tank that weighs 3 kg. They search for the cheapest LNG distributor and sell LNG to their neighbors for a profit of between 2,000 and 3,000 Indonesian Rupiahs (IDR).

4. **Buyers of unused goods**
   Using a cart, they go in and out villages buying unused goods at cheap prices. They then sell these goods to custodians for a higher price.

5. **Material delivery people**
   These people work in material stores delivering goods bought by customers. Small amounts are not worth delivering by car. The only other choice is for the workers to use carts. The delivery fee is already included in the price of the goods. If they are lucky, they might get tips from the customers after the goods arrive.

6. **Bread vendors**
   These bread vendors buy bread from wholesale and sell it in villages and housing complexes. There are two kinds of vendors. Those who are factory staff and those who are not staff, who sell privately.

7. **Street vendors**
   The shops are also their homes; the goods sold are cigarettes, drinks, bath supplies, noodles and other goods in small amounts.

8. **Motorcycle washers**
   People who work in the motorcycle wash get a commission for each motorcycle successfully washed. They are allowed to come and go at anytime. There is no contract, but usually if they do not show up without notification; the owner will not use their services again.

9. **Fruit vendors**
   The fruit vendors will buy fruit at the market and then he cut it into small pieces to sell it again. Customers like this kind of service, since for a certain charge they can have mixed fruit called rujak, which is mixed fruit in a sauce.

10. **Becak drivers**
   Using pedicabs called becaks, they deliver people from...
the market to their homes. This transportation is a favorite since it can carry a lot and is quite cheap. Also it can take you directly in front of your house.

11. Suppliers of sauce and vendor needs

They supply sauce and oilseed to vendors. Sauce is a favorite for many people so vendors always need it. Shop owner choose to wait rather than having to buy from the factory. This kind of sauce is usually not sold in a big market. The suppliers will drop off the sauce early in the morning and will collect money in the late afternoon.

12. Cracker suppliers

Long traveling distances require the use of modified motorcycles. These suppliers sell crackers to small shops.

13. Peuyeum vendors

Peuyeum is a traditional food made from cassava. This cassava root tape is usually made by one person. It is easy and the profit is much greater than buying from others.

14. Banana vendors

Banana vendors will sell their goods to a market after gathering bananas from farmers.

15. Periphery welders

These are weltering experts, who weld iron on a gate or other iron equipment. They will go around hoping for house owners to use their services, or attract building contractors, who need their weltering expertise.

16. Cracker vendors

Cracker vendors sell crackers that are set into the wood carried on their shoulders, they walk around selling crackers inside and outside villages or housing complexes.

I conducted a short interview with two persons from the above. Below is a statement from Enjang who is a supplier of sauce and other vendor needs.

I usually bring 50 bottles of sauce and two tins of oil seed. One tin consists of 17 kilos of oilseed. I supply small vendors, such as rice and food vendors and street noodle vendors. I drop this off in the morning. Then I go home for some rest and food. Late in the afternoon, I go back and collect money from the vendors. While I am waiting, I usually get some sleep or play with my children. Sometimes if there is someone who needs goods on credit, I will look for it and deliver it to neighbor that will pay the credit.

When asked about his daily profit, Enjang said that from each sauce bottle, he makes about 500 IDR and for each kilo of oilseed, he makes 500 IDR. Enjang could not answer exactly how much profit he makes in a day, but he assumes around 500,000 IDR. It depends on how many goods he buys that day.

The story is different with Saiful, who works as a motorcycle washer. For each motorcycle that he washes, the owner will pay 2,500 IDR. If he is lucky, he will get a tip from the motorcycle owner, of about 2,000 IDR. Saiful can wash 10 motorcycles a day, so he could make 25,000 IDR in one day. With tips, he could earn up to 50,000 IDR. However, it is not every day that Saiful is able to make 50,000 IDR. When business is slow, he might only make between 20,000 and 30,000 IDR. Both Enjang and Saiful admit that their earnings are only sufficient for daily food. I asked their opinions on productive work.

Below are Saiful's opinions:

I am the first worker who comes to work early in this washing place. From 8 am, while other workers are still asleep, I am preparing for work. I must wait for the first customer. Customers usually come in at 8:30 a.m., although there are some who come before eight. I continue working until noon, take a rest for one hour and then work until 6 pm. After that, I go home. If there is nothing to do at home, I return to my workplace at 8 pm and work until 10. I couldn’t work like a bachelor who would work until midnight.

Saiful works for a total of 11 hours per day. He is able to wash one motorcycle per hour, so the maximum would be 10 - 11 motorcycles per day. This is just an assumption, if Saiful continues working non-stop. On the contrary, once Saiful washes one motorcycle he might not be able to wash the next one. It depends on the customer. Saiful might have to share his work with another worker.

What is different with Enjang is that it is impossible for him to add new customers, since the consequences are that he has to buy the goods supplied to vendors, in advance. Let’s say that one bottle of sauce is 2,000 IDR, He would need to have 100,000 IDR to pay for 50 bottles. He needs 34 kilograms of oilseed. Since oilseed costs 17,000 IDR per kilo, he would have to pay 578,000 IDR. In total he would have to prepare 678,000 IDR each day. He would need to have much more than that to fulfill his daily life. In fact, it is not every day that Enjang has that amount of money. There are still daily expenses that he has to pay before he leaves for work. He leaves a minimum of 50,000 IDR for food and 3,000 IDR for his children. This does not include credit, electricity, water and other needs. He also must pay the rent each month.

The concept of productive work, where a larger income could be earned for shorter working hours does
not appeal to people like Enjang and Saiful. For them, this would mean finding another job or adding more funds. It's a hard choice. Saiful admits that it is hard to find a job in this area. Even if there is work, he would have a hard time getting that job since he doesn't have other skills. He doesn't have any particular expertise or supporting certificates. For Enjang, there is no place to borrow money except from moneylenders with high interests. There is no bank, which he could access. Besides not understanding the procedures, Enjang does not have collateral. Also, he is afraid of owing money to the bank. He is afraid that if he could not pay, he will be caught by loan sharks. Enjang has heard many stories about moneylenders who are really crude and take away all the goods they could carry. All he is able to do is just keep working, to get through the day, then make plans so he could live for another month. Enjang rents a small house in the slum area, where he lives with his wife and his two little children. From time to time, Saiful lives alone in the city while his wife and children stay in the village, where the cost of living is lower.

If Enjang and Saiful became seriously ill, they would be forced to stop working, the family income would disappear. As their sickness would not cure in one day, they would have to borrow money to pay their living costs. The worst would be if they had to go into the hospital. Enjang would have to sell everything he has, and then start from beginning.

B. Best practices discovered from my journey to Japan

My journey to Japan was inspiring. I was especially inspired by the cities and the Japanese people. The lessons I learned are:

1. **Equal citizens**
   
   We could see how Japanese people feel that they come from the same layer in the hierarchical system. All people have great pride and confidence in themselves. This attitude should be adapted by all countries, which expect to eliminate poverty. Poverty sometimes comes from the attitude of wanting others to feel pity, in order to get aid from other people.

2. **People-friendly cities**
   
   In Tokyo, almost everywhere, we saw people on bicycles or walking from their home to the office. Houses are in proper arrangement inside the city. The city is supported by a good transportation system. The city feels comfortable to stay in. The situation is far from that of Jakarta, where people are forced to live outside the city. If there are houses in the city, the condition is far from ideal. Streets are full of busses and cars since there is no mass transportation. Most of our time is spent in the street traveling between the office and home.

3. **Participation in sorting garbage**
   
   Disposing and sorting garbage is one of Japan's cultures. In many places we found garbage that had been sorted into tin, organic and non-organic garbage.

4. **Caring leadership**
   
   The warm greeting from the Mayor of Umaji Village was deep and amazing. As a friendly gesture, the Mayor took the time to make drinks for all of his guests. With this close relationship, the citizen will surely not hesitate to talk about their complaints, and feel that their leader will be there when they need him. There is no significant difference between urban and rural areas in terms of using technology. Living in rural areas doesn't mean deprivation of technology usage. Umaji Village Office is as good as the offices in Tokyo.

5. **Disciplined facilities**
   
   The Yuzu lavatories had a system to keep the area clean. The toilet door will only open after the water faucet is turned on. This way, everybody who wants to leave the toilet, must wash their hands first.

C. Future plans

I will continue to help in the Social Work Practice Resource Center (SWPRC), where I work now, to document social work practices in the field related to the intervention of working with low income citizens. SWPRC will make accessible:

1. **Micro credit**
   
   A low interest loan that could be used to subsidize income.

2. **Positive deviance**
   
   Spread positive behavior amongst workers with similar lifestyles, so that they can learn to achieve a higher standard of living.

3. **Entrepreneurship training**
   
   A training program for workers to increase entrepreneurship skills that could increase their income.

To spread awareness on poverty issues, SWPRC will develop internship guidelines for freshly graduated social workers and social work programs in Non Government Organizations.
## Anex 1. List of Workers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oil Vendor</th>
<th>Vegetable Vendor</th>
<th>LNG Vendor</th>
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<th>Bread Vendor</th>
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<th>Fruit Vendor</th>
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<th>Sauce and Vendor Needs Supplier</th>
<th>Cracker Supplier</th>
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<tr>
<td>Pesyeum Vendor</td>
<td>Banana Vendor</td>
<td>Periphery Welder</td>
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Overcoming Poverty: Lessons from Japan’s Experience

Kensuke MATSUEDA (Japan)
Junior Program Officer, International Development Research Institute,
Foundation for Advanced Studies on International Development (FASID)¹

Mr. Matsueda received his Bachelor degree in Economics from Kansai University in 2002 and his Master’s degree in International Relations from Graduate School of International Relations, Ritsumeikan University in 2004. He started his career as a journalist at social sector of the Yomiuri Shimbun in 2004. He currently works at Foundation for Advanced Studies on International Development (FASID), involving in economic development research and implementation of local ODA (Official Development Assistance) Task Force seminars.

1. Japan’s Status Quo on the Poverty Situation and Social Security

1-1 The number of poor living in Japan is large. However, the exact figure is incomprehensible because the nation has no official poverty line. Following the Lehman Brothers bankruptcy, the world was caught up in throes of recession with the blink of an eye. Also in Japan, large numbers of non-regular contract workers have been laid off over the past several months, and the situation has worsened at a faster pace than originally forecast. The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare has predicted that about 85,000 non-regular contract workers will have lost their jobs between October 2008 and March 2009². In worst cases, jobless people will become “homeless,” living in a park or in a riverbank. We tend to believe that people are “poor” only when they are starving, or have no shelter, and so on (in another words “absolute poverty”). But actually, these laid off workers are poor. They need help. The nation should take the situation more seriously and listen to their voices directly.

When you look at different studies, there are many definitions of “poverty”: Uni-dimensional versus multi-dimensional, absolute versus relative, and static versus dynamic. New terms are also now in use, e.g.: (relative) deprivation, and social exclusion³. However, there is no such thing as an official “poverty line” in Japan. There is data reported by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) showing that 19.5 million people in Japan live below the relative poverty line. Whatever the definition of poverty is, the important thing is to use it to monitor the economic well-being of the population, to evaluate policy impact and to identify the most vulnerable.

1-2 Japan’s social security system is maintained for all people. However, some people are left out from the system.

Japan’s modern social security system is based on the state’s responsibility in sharing and mitigating social risks of the population. This system was established after World War II and included in Article 25 of Japan’s Constitution. Article 25 is written as stated below: 1) All people shall have the right to maintain the minimum standards of wholesome and cultured living. 2) The State must make efforts to promote and expand social welfare, social security and public health services to cover every aspect of the life of the people⁴. Japan’s social security is generally divided into five categories; social insurance, public assistance, social welfare, public health and medical care, and healthcare for the aged. Social insurance is a system of mutual assistance in need. Public assistance provides support to maintain

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¹ FASID is a research organization funded largely by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. Its primary functions are to organize education and training programs for a new generation of Japanese development professionals, and to conduct research and surveys on international development. URL http://www.fasid.or.jp/
² The Yomiuri Shimbun, Morning Paper 31 December 2008
³ Lecture of Dr. Aya K. Abe, National Institute of Population and Social Security Research
the standard of living of all citizens. The focus is mainly on social welfare for the poor. Social welfare enhances the people's quality of life, especially for the socially vulnerable. Public health and medical care protect the people's health. In addition to these four categories, there is healthcare for the latter-stage elderly.

However, some people are actually left out from Japan's social security system. These are mostly: the homeless (estimated to be around 19 thousand in 2007), illegal foreigners and some legal foreign residents, single women such as widows, single-mothers, part-time workers and non-permanent jobholders. According to a national survey, the average age of homeless persons is 55.9 (50 to 64 year-olds account for 65.7%), 96% are male and 4% are female. These are virtually all single men, so they are not reproducing on the streets. Nevertheless, the number of newly homeless people in the past year added to an increase of over 30%. This increase in homelessness would not occur were it not for the existing social structure. Due to this fact, we can say that being homeless is not the individual's fault.

1-3 I participated in the JENESYS Programme to know the current state of Japan and to find lessons from Japan's experience on poverty issues.

At FASID International Development Research Institute, I am doing research on lessons learnt from Japan's development experiences. Specifically, my research topic is on the institutionalization of rural communities based on social capital, its political implications for developing countries and Japan's Official Development Assistance. As a case study of institutionalization, I examine the role and potential of Japan's Agricultural Producer's Co-operative Association (APCA), which is a very small community-based farmer's association working in coalition to produce agricultural products. APCA originally functions as an organization for keeping agricultural yields, but APCA also exercises a vital role in the prevention of isolation in a rural community to avoid the risk of poverty. It is because of social capital such as human relations based/built on trust, the spirit of helping each other, normative consciousness, and human networking is created and strengthened among rural community dwellers, in the process of institutionalization. I believe that the enrichment of social capital is the key to creating a better community. This is a similar concept to the social inclusion approach and which is why I participated in the JENESYS programme to learn the current state of Japan's poverty and to find some lessons to overcome poverty.

2. Personal Observations and Recommendations

2-1 Homelessness is one of the most typical and serious results of social exclusion. Social inclusion for homeless people should be a priority to be considered among more immediate and pressing issues.

As I mentioned in 1-1 and 1-2, social and economic problems regarding unemployed homeless people are becoming more serious than ever before as a result of the global economic downturn. Although there are many poor people such as single mothers and illegal immigrants who need help to combat poverty, we should take an immediate measure to help homeless people get back into society, through the social inclusion approach.

In the JENESYS program, we visited the Kotobuki-cho district in the city of Yokohama, located in the dose house area where 80% of the residents receive public assistance. Yukio Takazawa, chief of the secretariat of Kotobuki Supporters Exchange Association, gave us the facts regarding regular workers lived on the street along with daily employed workers. 47% of the homeless people had worked as regular workers before being laid off by companies. Almost all of the homeless people are male and two thirds are at the age of 50-64. Half of them experienced divorce. Poverty among many homeless people is deeply rooted in the poverty of the human relationship. Actually, a homeless man who lives separately from his two children said, “Before becoming homeless, I divorced and then sent my former wife and two children back to her own hometown. Because of Japan's strict norm, it is very shameful for a man to become jobless. A man is never allowed to go back to his hometown and rely on his parents or other family members as long as he cannot make money for his family. This is a social norm of Japan. That's the way it is. He added, “I hope to see my children once again some day…But, I may not recognize them. So, I'm thinking, it's enough for me that they just remember me as their father when they grow up.”

Regardless of their reasons to be jobless and homeless, the problem is virtually caused by the lack of social capital (e.g., the spirit of helping each other). Some people say that it is a matter of self-responsibility, however, I believe it is a social structural and normative failure. Furthermore, the most serious problem is that there is no opportunity/option to join the workforce again, once they become homeless. If homeless people want to hunt for a new job, they need a permanent address. And if they want to get a permanent address, they need a guarantor for housing. In this way, they are socially excluded and isolated not because
of their laziness or any other personal characteristics. Thus, I believe the homeless issue is a typical result of social exclusion and that only a social inclusion approach can be a countermeasure. Social inclusion for homeless people should be more immediate and pressing issues and priorities.

2-2 Charity is insufficient in overcoming poverty. A sustainable support system based on a stable fund-raising capacity is necessary.

To achieve to the goal of overcoming poverty through the social inclusion approach, there should be a number of ways to take action. The crucial point is whether the supporting system for the poor is sustainable. In the early stage of aid, support for the poor usually includes charity-based activities. However, charity alone is insufficient for social change. In this sense, social enterprise plays a very important role as a new model of sustainable support for overcoming poverty. A young Japanese NPO, the Kamonohashi Project, which actively engages in the child prostitution problem in Cambodia, has a unique fundraising system and serves as a precedent of a new social actor.

In Cambodia, the Kamonohashi Project is working on vocational training, creating employment opportunities and access to the local economic market. Meanwhile, they have an IT business department as a division of the Tokyo office, dealing with many jobs including website building. The total budget for FY 2006 reached 33 million yen: 18 million yen generated by their IT business and 15 million yen from donations and membership fees. The Kamonohashi Project shares their vision for social change with their clients. This system leads to cover revenue shortages and create sustainable support activities. This is a good example of a small NGO/NPO, which engages in poverty reduction. There are many examples of social enterprise inside and outside Japan. I hope that researches on social enterprise become more accumulated and advanced.

2-3 Ownership among people is a key to achieving goals and finding solutions as well as developing key leaders.

In the process of overcoming poverty and gaining wealth for people, ownership is significant. The case of Umaji village, a very small village in mountain-ringed region of Kochi Prefecture, showed us a successful example of people’s ownership in creating YUZU brand products and selling them all over Japan. What impressed me the in the Umaji case was the “humanity” of the villagers. In other words, they pursued the commodity sales strategy based on well-rounded character among villagers.

Takashi Kamiji, Mayor of Umaji village, has strong leadership with his unique personality and dwellers share his vision: to make a beautiful small village which people feel at ease at anytime and smile at each other wherever they are. Though this maybe possible with a small number of populations in a village, dwellers are actually striving to survive with YUZU products in the very competitive market of Japan. According to the book about Umaji Village5, Mochifumi Toutani, the section chief of Umaji Japan Agricultural Cooperatives (JA Umaji) is always thinking of the comparative advantages of the geographically disadvantaged village. One of his answers was the availability of telecommunication devices such as telephone and fax machines. The other regarded the humanity of the villagers as he mentioned a sense of nostalgia, pleasantness, warm-heartedness, surprise, and impression. These all seem to be things that the Japanese forgot during industrialization and urbanization. He figured that good companionship was what kept this feeling.

In an economically efficient society like the urban area of Japan, social capital such as human relations based/built on trust, the spirit of helping each other, normative consciousness, and human networking is weakened. However, in a small community like Umaji village, they are connected closely together and this contributes to enhancing ownership and finding solutions to problems. The good example of Umaji village offers a strong inspiration to other communities in terms of development strategy as well as infinite possibilities in the field of agribusiness.

2-4 Public awareness campaigns for overcoming poverty should be created. Activists should find more effective ways to appeal poverty issues to the media and to eventually involve people.

The ten-day JENESYS program made me realize how ignorant I had been about the poverty situation in Japan. One reason was my indifference and the other reason was a shortage of public awareness for the majority of the people. The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare estimates that 85,000 non-regular workers might become jobless by the end of FY 2008. They will automatically lose their residence along with their jobs because they live in

5 Masahiko Otoshi, Gokkun Umaji Mura no Mura Okoshi, The Big Success Story of a Small Village, Nikkei Publishing, Tokyo Japan
housing provided by companies. These days, companies can no longer secure an employee’s life. Family and close friends can no longer support each other. Indeed, the public safety net does not work well. This is very awful situation for our standard of living. To step into a new stage of creating a better society, public awareness should be a priority. NGOs and NPOs, as private activists, must involve many people in their activities to arouse interest in poverty (e.g., Toshikoshi Haken Village, a temporary relief center for jobless and homeless non-regular workers, organized by Makoto Yuasa, the head of NPO Moyai). I also suggest that media-trained reporters deepen their understandings on poverty issues in a professional way. The newspaper and TV industry should promote special unified campaigns (e.g., anti-drunk-driving campaign) for overcoming poverty as a whole.

3. Personal Action Plan and Concrete Suggestions for A Follow Up Programme

3-1 I will feedback my personal observations to my research report at FASID-IDRI.

As I wrote in 1-3, I am doing research on lessons learnt from Japan’s experiences in stages of development: the institutionalization of a rural community based on social capital and its implications for developing countries, at the FASID International Development Research Institute. By writing this report, I can add a lot of actual information on the status quo of poverty issues in Japan and reflect various inspirations that I got from the program. In the programme, I learned that many Japanese homeless people are ashamed of themselves being jobless and homeless and they intentionally avoid being in contact with society. Finally, they shut themselves out from society and have no choice but to live alone in a park or on a riverbank in spite of having their own beloved families. If they had asked someone for help, they might have had an opportunity to try another option. However, in reality, they could not rely on anybody to prevent them from falling in poverty. One of the serious causes is deep-rooted in the weakness of social capital among the Japanese. I am restructuring my entire research report to make strong recommendations for overcoming poverty in urban and rural areas.

3-2 The JENESYS Programme strongly motivated me to engage in issues on overcoming poverty in the world; a vision for my future goal.

I believe that getting to know is the very first step in moving onto the next stage, so I have chosen my jobs related to information. Before I moved to FASID, I was working as a journalist for The Yomiuri Shimbun, which is one of the most popular quality newspapers in Japan, whose morning paper circulation has surpassed 10 million copies since 1994. For four years, I reported the daily news in various fields, such as: politics, economic and social issues, international affairs, education, culture, and local news. Having participated in the JENESYS program as a member of a media/advocacy group, I strongly recognized the significance of public awareness regarding poverty issues in Japan and in the world. Overcoming Poverty is one of the biggest challenges for creating a better tomorrow. To actively contribute to this effort, I will continue to think about what I can do for the world to overcome poverty, and to pursue a professional position where I can combine my insight of journalism with the expertise of development and poverty reduction.

3-3 Some ideas for a follow-up program to secure future leaders to be true leaders.

Monitoring and a follow-up mechanism are very important in evaluating long-term outcomes of a program. To monitor all participants’ activities in Asia and Oceania region, I recommend that the JENESYS (Group C) issue an annual report under the theme of “Overcoming Poverty.” All participants update their country’s report once a year: the country’s status quo and poverty issues, short-term and long-term personal action plans, a future goal, and so on. An individual report should be 3-6 pages in A4 size in a similar manner as the final report. The annual report can be distributed to all participants through a Google group page. In addition, the JENESYS (Group C) should hold reunions in 2013 and 2018 five and ten years later, if possible. This way, all participants as future leaders will be acting as true leaders in their respective fields.

* * *

Finally, I would like to thank all of my friends from 15 countries for their kindness and friendship over the 10 days of the JENESYS East Asia Future Leaders Program. In addition, my special thanks go to Dr. Aya Abe, Mika Mukai, Mariko Mugitani, Yojiro Tanaka, and the Japan Foundation for giving me a great opportunity to think about poverty issues both in Japan and in the world.
Overcoming Poverty that Neo-liberalism and Globalization Bring
- Learning from Kotobuki-cho, Moyai, Umaji

Sun Young Kim (Korea (Republic of Korea))
Staff, Youth Concern Team, Work Together Foundation

Ms. Kim received her Bachelor of Business Administration from Yonsei University in 2001. After working at general affairs department and the representative of Mapo Young men’s association, she started to work at Work Together Foundation, running the committee of the young men’s organization that deals with youth unemployment problems, as well as organizing projects and symposiums for youth.

The JENESYS Program “Overcoming Poverty through a Social Inclusion Approach” helped me to understand the situation of poverty in Japan and other Asian Countries, and to compare those with ours. I was also able to make many foreign friends who struggle against poverty.

I am grateful to the Japan Foundation and 21 friends from Asian and Oceania countries for giving me a chance to broaden my vision.

Similarities and Differences in Poverty and Safety Net between Korea and Japan

Through this JENESYS program, I found that Korea and Japan have similar issues regarding poverty and the safety net. I guess it’s because Korea and Japan have totally subordinated their financial industry and economy system to neo-liberalism and globalization. Also I think it’s because Korea has adapted the Japanese system in many aspects, including the company, government and policy.

<Similarities>
- Safety net based on the company
- Decrease in lifetime employment and increase of non-regular workers (subcontract, dispatched workers, etc)
- An explosive increase in youth unemployment
- Aging society and low birthrates

<Differences>
- A considerable disparity in social welfare and safety net budget ratio to GDP: about 20% in Japan, about 6% in Korea.
- Active citizen participation and civil uprising in Korea and passive resistance in Japan
- Help and support from parents and neighbors in Korea and self-reliance in Japan.

Second Economic Crisis and Mass Unemployment in 2009

Many economists forecast that a global financial crisis would pull down Korean economic growth to under 0% in 2009, resulting in mass unemployment. The people most likely to lose their jobs are temporary workers who were once lifetime employees before the first Korean economic crisis in 1998. Actually, to be a non-regular worker means to descend to the lower-class from the middle-class because their income is about 50% of regular workers,’ while their social welfare benefit is under 50%, despite the fact that their work load is the same. To make matters worse, this year many temporary workers in the lower class will be in danger of falling into the bottom-class after they lose their jobs.

The global financial crisis is decreasing the number of new jobs in Korea, so university graduates don’t have opportunities to get regular jobs. In the past, most graduates could join the middle-class as large enterprise lifetime workers. These days however, they do part time jobs or get temporary jobs, making it hard for them to come into the middle-class. They even remain out of the safety net, for example, access to unemployment benefits. Unemployment benefits are only available to people who
have paid the premium for more than 6 months, a legal obligation on the part of the employer.

Now, we can see how person falls into poverty and how social gaps in various fields including income become wider and wider.

**Neo-liberalism and Globalization as Main Reasons for Increase in Poverty**

Korea has reorganized its economy and social system to implement neo-liberalism and globalization for more than 15 years. The government and statesmen have persuaded people that neo-liberalism and globalization would give us more income and wealth. Of course, GDP and SOC (Social Overhead Capital) figures are increasing, and the upper 20% have become wealthier. On the contrary, income figures may have risen, but the relative value of income has fallen and the middle-class has thinned out. The diamond-shaped income-class (or economy-class, social-class) of the 1980s has collapsed, and now we have triangle shape in Korea. It's because under globalization, wealth created in the village is taken downtown, and from there it is transmitted to a small city, from a small city to a big city, from a big city to a metropolis, from a metropolis to Manhattan, New York. It means that neo-liberalism and globalization have created more and more poor more and have made poverty worse, degenerating the middle-class to lower-class, and lower class to the bottom class.

**Learning from Kotobuki-cho, Moyai and Umaji**

I was able to get some alternative solutions from Kotobuki-cho, Moyai and Umaji in overcoming globalization and neo-liberalism, the root causes of poverty.

1) **In Kotobuki-cho, the power of community**

In Kotobuki-cho, I found that the power of community could overcome poverty. When people in Tokyo didn't know how to ask their neighbors for help and support, the poor in a slum community in wharf village were making a happy life together by helping each other and protecting themselves. I could see and feel vivid and humane expressions on their faces, which were different from what I saw on the streets in Tokyo.

2) **In Moyai, the importance of citizenship**

In Moyai, I found that it is possible for citizens to express and concentrate their own opinions and feelings about social problems and political issues. Japanese usually consider participating in demonstrations to be immature and interfere with economic development. But through programs and demonstrations organized by Moyai, people acquire experiences, helping them to understand what citizenship means. This has helped people to build communities and to overcome neo-liberalism and poverty.

3) **In Umaji, the alternative economic system**

In Umaji, I observed the local-based community economic system, an alternative to subordination to globalization and neo-liberalism. They create local products, income and jobs, which are circulated in locally. This is just a small and single case, but if we apply this model to other villages and small cities, in a sense we could create a defense against neo-liberalism and globalization.

**Conclusion**

Korea has faced a serious unemployment problem because of neo-liberalism and globalization. 1,500,000 people lost their jobs and became very poor. Families were broken through divorce and other reasons. Since the efforts of the government and enterprises were very limited in solving these problems, the press, religious circles and labor and civil society founded ‘The Committee of the National Movement for Overcoming Unemployment’ in June 1998. It started a national campaign to overcome the difficult period, which was a result of unemployment and did fundraising through the support of the main broadcasting stations. Over a hundred million dollars were collected. The committee disbursed this fund to help 5,300,000 unemployed, the homeless and their families. I think this experience showed us what an important and strong power solidarity and community have. Now, Korea is facing a second economic crisis and mass unemployment after 1998. The country has expectations for the active power of citizen participants.

We also have a problem awaiting a solution. That is, how to make an alternative local-based community economic system. It is undoubtedly an extremely hard task, but it must be solved. As a part of an effort to find an answer, the Work Together Foundation has tried to create local-based social jobs and social enterprises. Of course,
it is at the starting stage, but we are providing business skills, education, training, and very low-interest lending for people to start up and operate social enterprises, in an effort to propose an alternative economic policy to overcome poverty in neo-liberalism.
After she finished her study at the Mahidol University, Bangkok in 1997, Ms. Vanxay continued to work for Ministry of Public Health. In 1999 she moved to work for Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MOLSW). Currently, she works at State Authority of Social Security which also belong to MOLSW and is establishing the new scheme or making reforms from the old system for civil servant scheme of Social Security.

I. Social security in Laos

1. General information on Lao PDR (Laos)

The Lao People's Democratic Republic is a landlocked country located in South East Asia, sharing borders with Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, China and Myanmar. The population is estimated at 5.874 million (2007) with an average life expectancy at birth, of 62.5 years. Infant mortality is 64.4 per 1000 live births and the fertility rate is 4.2% children per woman (2002).

The land area is 236,800 square km, with the majority of the population (83%) living in rural areas and only 17% living in the major cities.

The population is composed of 48 different ethnic groups, of which the Laolum located in the lowland areas close to the Mekong River is predominant (67%). The official religion is Buddhism.

The GDP per capita is 701 USD (2007).

The Laotian terrain is mostly rugged and mountainous with some plains and plateaus.

The rainy season runs from May to November and the dry season is from December to April.

74.37% of the Laotian population (10-year old and above) is active, of which 49.66% are male and 50.34% are female.

Lao PDR has rich water resources, The Mekong is the main water resource for navigation as well as agriculture and hydropower development.

The official language in Lao PDR is the Lao language as is spoken and written.

2. Current Social Protection Programs and initiatives in Lao PDR

History

During the years of central planning, the only statutory social security system was managed and controlled by the state and catered mainly to civil servants, public employees, state-owned enterprise (SOE) workers, war invalids and party officials. Benefits were provided to the public sector and SOE workers as part of their conditions of service and to revolutionaries for their service to the country. The scheme provided mainly health care, disability and retirement benefits. The system was financed from general revenue.

Since the adoption of the New Economic Mechanism in 1986, a private economic sector began to emerge and the majority of state-owned enterprises were restructured. Some were privatized, while others became joint ventures or remained under state ownership. With the adoption of Decree 178/PM in 1993, SOE workers were excluded from the public sector social security scheme. The labor code adopted in 1994 shifted responsibility for the provision of social security benefits to the SOE’s themselves. From then on, private sector and state-owned-enterprise workers were mandated to set-up their own funds to care for the social welfare of their workers.

Public Sector Social Security Scheme

This scheme was founded in 1986 for all public sector employees, including civil servants, the military and the police. It provides coverage for retirement pensions, disability, survivor benefits, war invalidity, work injury, birth and death benefits; orphans’ pensions; child allowances and health insurance. There are no unemployment benefits as government employment is secure.

The Civil Service Social Security Scheme provides a range of benefits including health care. Decree 178 uses
a Fee for Service reimbursement model with members paying a co-payment for expenses exceeding a very low ceiling. Members contribute 6% of their basic salary and the Government subsidizes the scheme. Scheme membership is estimated at about 178,000 (2005) with dependents numbering about 680,000, bringing total coverage to about 875,000.

This model will change to a capitation contract model under the new Decree 70/PM currently being piloted in Vientiane Capital and Vientiane Province. The capitation level proposed for the pilot is 40,000 kip per person, based on the existing contribution rates of 6% of the basic salary.

The State Authority of Social Security.

This is a new organization which reformed from Decree 178/PM. The establishment was on June 2008. There are branched up to district level in the whole country.

The new decree – Decree70/PM 2007- provides coverage for retirement pensions, invalidity benefits, survivor’s benefits, sickness, maternity, funeral, and work injury. Contributions are shared between the worker (civil servant) paying 8% of the total salary and the employer (Government) paying 8.5%. The objective of the reforms is to enhance long-term sustainability and improve outcomes for members. The scheme is characterized as a defined benefit social insurance scheme. The Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Public Security will also reform their schemes to be in line with the Public Sector scheme, covering similar benefits and using similar financing mechanisms. The Ministry of Defense began a capitation based health insurance system in military hospitals from 1 October 2007.

Social Security Organization.

The Social Security Scheme is a national statutory social insurance scheme providing social security to the private sector and SOE employees. The scheme was established in 2001 and is administered by the Social Security Organization (SSO). The scheme provides cover for retirement pensions, invalidity benefits, survivor’s benefits, sickness, maternity, funeral, and work injury. The scheme also provides health insurance coverage using a capitation contract model. There is no coverage for unemployment.

To date, the scheme is operational in Vientiane Municipality, Vientiane Province, Savannakhet Province, Khammouane Province and has commenced registration of workers in Borihamxay Province. Membership is mandatory for all registered enterprises with 10 or more employees. There is provision for smaller enterprises and individuals to join on a voluntary basis.

The scheme is financed by employee and employer contributions with employees contributing 4.5% and employers 5% of the employee’s wage, with an income ceiling of 1,500,000 kip. There is no government cash contribution to the social security fund.

In 2006, the scheme provided coverage to about 70,000 members; 36,000 workers and their dependents (spouses and children under 18 years). About 300 enterprises are currently participating. Despite the mandatory nature of the scheme, compliance levels are about 50%, meaning that only half of those legally entitled to coverage have actually registered.

Medical care services are currently offered at 3 public hospitals in Vientiane Capital, 2 public hospitals in Vientiane Province, 1 public hospital in Savannakhet Province and 3 public hospitals in Khammouane Province. The medical care is provided without additional user fees. The health-care package is comprehensive, with few treatments excluded. The capitation level is currently 65,000 kip per person.

The SSO Board is legally and financially independent from the government and consists of representatives from the government, employers, and employees. It is intended that the scheme will eventually extend into other provinces. The scheme is characterized as a compulsory and contributory defined benefits social insurance program.

II. Personal observations and recommendations of the poverty issues and social inclusion approach in Japan.

The policy on social security in Japan is a very strong and complete package with coverage for the poor or low-income families. The main organ responsible for overseeing and carrying out these schemes is the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. This is the reason that it is easy to cooperate and coordinate between different sectors. The Japanese Government has a general budget. Tax and especially social assistance schemes in Japan are very useful for the poor and low-income families. In a society of course, we cannot avoid problems or issues, but Japan has the policy to support and solve poverty issues.

Japan has very good examples on solving poverty issues and social inclusion, like Umaji village. This village can be very a good example to other countries, which can learn from them. However, Laos is very different, because we have different situations and have just started to realize them. We need to learn more from Japan. With the social security schemes in Laos now, we still can not provide to the poor. We have just started with people who have
Souvannamethy VANXAY

income only. As for the poor however, we are still unable to provide for them because of a lack of government budget. We can provide health care benefits to the members of the scheme but they are still not satisfied with the available health care services. The health care service need to be more improved and strengthened by public relation campaign for awareness of their benefits.

III. What you have gained and have taken home through participating in this program.

I have gained and have taken home through participating in this program many things in my mind. I may not be able explain it all in English but I can say that I found the 11 days of this course very useful in learning about the culture of Japan, lifestyle, development of the country, and policies regarding poverty reduction. I found friendship, exchanged ideas with those from many different countries, learned from each other, and learned how to contact and get support from Japan. I have ideas as well as an understanding on how to work and provide public assistance like in Japan. This program helped me to understand more about our social security scheme. Before, I thought that social security was only needed to provide benefits to people who have a permanent income. I had no idea on how to provide for the poor, and ways of overcoming issues through social inclusion.

IV. Personal action plan and if you have any concrete suggestions for a follow up program.

I was very interested in the Japanese social assistance programs, which provide support and assistance to countries like Cambodia. Laos has similar situations as Cambodia does. We try to help the homeless and elderly who have not fallen in to the security net. I will try to keep in contact with the program and learn from our friends.
Ms. Lai received her Bachelor of Arts in Chinese Studies from University of Malaya in 2004 and Master of Science in Gender and Development Studies from Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) in 2008. After working as a project officer at Women's Development Collective (WDC) and a research officer of Gender Studies Programme at University of Malaya, her current position is a lecturer at Women's Development Research Center (KANITA- http://www.usm.my/kanita/default.asp), Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM).

Malaysia has an overall population of 27.17 million with a GDP growth rate of 6.7 percent and an unemployment rate of 3.1 percent (2007: Department of Statistic Malaysia). Absolute and relative terms have been employed in conceptualizing poverty in Malaysia. Absolute poverty is measured by using a Poverty Line Income; whereas Relative poverty is defined in terms of inequality between groups and measured by using an income disparity ratio of ethnic, urban and rural income groups. Moreover, relative poverty is defined as the proportion of household earnings in incomes less than half of the mean or median income. Over time, the Malaysian Government has played a significant role in eradicating extreme poverty and providing social and community services. Overall poverty dropped from 52.4 per cent in 1970 to 6.8 per cent in 1997 while the number of poor households was reduced from 1 million to around 294,000 in the same period. However, there remains on-going poverty and marginalization, especially among rural and indigenous populations. Also, there are significant differences among various regions and between rural and urban areas.

Notably, there is a high incidence of poverty among indigenous peoples, especially the minorities in East Malaysia (EPU: 20061), whose landownership, which is already vulnerable, is increasingly threatened. It is predicted that the future of an estimated 150,000 indigenous people (made up of 18 ethnic groups) in Peninsular Malaysia is bleak, due to the loss of land and livelihoods resulting from clearing of forests, sudden eviction to make way for development projects and paltry cash compensation. In addition, the Ninth Malaysia Plan reported that poverty was five times higher in rural areas than in urban areas (EPU: 2006). In other words, rural-urban income disparity continues to widen.

The Ministry of Women, Family and community Development (MWFCD) oversees four agencies under its direct jurisdiction. The agencies are, the Department for Women Development (JPW), the Social Welfare Department of Malaysia (JKMM), the National Population Family Development Board (LPPKN) and the Social Institute of Malaysia (ISM). Financial aid is available for families who earn below RM720 (USD 200) in Peninsular Malaysia, RM830 (USD 230) in Sarawak and RM960 (USD260) in Sabah (as announced in the latest budget allocation for 2009). Prior to this, those families who earn below RM400 (USD110) were eligible to receive financial assistance. In addition to this, the government also provides financial assistance on a monthly basis to people with disabilities. Yet, the assistance is not sufficient, as it is merely about RM150 (USD50) for a month. Furthermore, various economic, social and training programs are created for single mothers and female-headed households as efforts to reduce the in poverty among women. These programs include micro-credit enterprises, ICT training and income generating activities (Special Schemes for Single Mothers). The government also finances training programs for the unemployed, to enhance their skills in a global market under recession. The Department of Orang Asli (Aborigines) is given a mandate to facilitate social and economic development in Orang Asli communities. Sadly, the department has received much criticism since the poverty among indigenous groups has remained the same or has worsened.

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Nevertheless, poverty is not static. It changes with the times. In addition, poverty is a mix of society, culture, politics and economic issues. As a researcher, one of my core responsibilities is to study and understand poverty issues through the incorporation of different perspectives. Lately, that has been to list workable recommendations that can feed into poverty eradication policies and programs of the government. In academia and through the educational platform, we can also contribute to create awareness and develop interest among the young future generation, on poverty issues.

I joined the Women's Development Research Centre (KANITA) as a lecturer last November. Prior to this, I worked in a women's non-profit organization for two and half years. I learnt the importance of grass root participation as a contributing factor to social movement. Citizens with different expertise have rights to participate actively in development processes. It should not be a merely top-down approach, given that a responsible leader must be willing to hear the voices from and through the society. Further more, the element of good governance has been identified among local NGOs and women's rights advocators as one of the directions in overcoming poverty. I embarked in research with one of the indigenous groups in Peninsular Malaysia for my master studies and our findings acknowledged the need to introduce livelihood strategies that champion sustainability in term of tangible and intangible resources. Further, the research on another Orang Asal (aborigine) group in East Malaysia detected increasing poverty incidences among the group. I would like to stress that the inequality of structure, programs and policy is the root cause of poverty in Malaysia.

Japan stands as a miracle in the eyes of the world. The amazing infrastructure and subway transportation system, the impressive standard of cleanliness and garbage management, the professional service and politeness caught my attention. Needless to say, Japan is always a case study for many other developing countries. However, the most wonderful experience was having been given the chance to explore a deeper level of Japanese society from the perspective of poverty. Obviously, there are always the unheard/-hidden voices of the minority, the marginalized, and vulnerable groups from mainstream society. The well-designed program (big credit to Mika san and Dr. Aya K. Abe) introduced us to a list of people working on a good cause to better the situation of badly affected groups.

Similar to many cases in various countries, women, children and the elderly are always the most vulnerable groups under the pressure of recession. These could be observed from the increasingly large numbers of Japanese women involved in non-regular jobs. Besides, most single mothers who are lacking in resources appear to be among the highest percentage of food-recipients from the Food Bank. Poverty issues affect men and women's lives differently, because women have an expected role as mother and wife and seen as complementary human resource to her spouse. Macro economics have always taken advantage of women as free labor and as a caretaker for the family members, e.g. children and the elderly. More over, women are yet to receive a fair opportunity in employment since the stereotype on men as the bread-winner is strongly implanted in Japanese society. My utmost recommendation is to conduct research action oriented on poverty, taking into account the gender perspective. A tailor-made list of recommendations could be applied to heterogeneous groups of poverty in Japanese society, especially for women of different age groups.

We were given chances to listen to four homeless elderly, a domestic violence survivor (Yamaguchi), a fighter against poverty (Yuasa), an angel in his mission to end poverty in Cambodia (Kabe), a truly impressive leader/ mayor (Umaji Village), a tireless and passionate president champion for worker issues (Mr. Tatsui), an amazing person who spent 19 years working with the homeless (Mr. Takazawa) and so on. They are ordinary people, just like you and me, who are making changes in their own lives and most importantly, making positive changes to the lives of others. They influence, encourage, enlighten, inspire, and awaken the mainstream society to listen, to care and to take action for the marginalized groups in the society. Every single victory started from a small step or a simple action. For instance, Yuasa wrote the famous book on poverty utilizing his knowledge and writing skills to spread awareness on poverty. Yamaguchi turned to play the significant role of helping women in poverty and victims of domestic violence. Obviously, they are not passive actors in society. They are exalting their efforts - doing something within their capacity. Change is happening to the actor himself/herself as it is to others. Significantly, they present a different lifestyle and haven't thought of claiming a reputation on what they have been done. It is simply a belief, a will, and a hope that stimulated their efforts into a reality.

Therefore, their real stories of fighting for good causes shall be written into friendly reader short articles to reach wider groups in Japanese society. The young generation needs to be encouraged, and inspired while mentors help them to build their confidence on what they can contribute to society. The repackaging image (positive images of marginalized group, victim/ passive vs. survivor/
assertive as shown by Ms. Yamaguchi) of the above hero/heroin is necessary to catch the attention of the Japanese youngster.

The trial and error process has been repeatedly shared by Mr. Kabe from the social enterprise sector. “I have high tolerance towards failure because there is no end to this day,” a sincere sharing from Mr. McJilton. The speaker of the Agricultural Association in Umaji village presented their marketing strategy and how they learn from trial and error for at least 10 years until eventually they are able to boost up their revenue to millions. All the sharing sends a strong message; which is not to give up during the ups (small victory) and downs (challenges) of making changes in society.

Humans created systems to rule society. But when the system fails a human being in a society, we shall modify and correct the system. The education system in most countries is based on competition and comparison. Students get stressed out and learn very little about the cooperative spirit and their responsibilities towards a caring society. The sincere sharing from one of the homeless people moved my heart. He felt sorry for the brilliant student who attacked him on the street because the student is living under high pressure of his studies. The so-called “left thinker” that we have approached in the program is definitely showing there is always alternative in life. The levels of happiness and satisfaction are not taken into account in the GDP, though. However, it is one of the fundamental basics to a healthy life. Bringing more elderly to share their valuable experiences with young generation will hopefully bridge the gap between old and young generations and to establish understandings towards poverty issues. Importantly, the activity will also carry the mandate on establishing equal relationships between the homeless and mainstream society. In line with homeless concern, the situation of elderly women is missing exposure. I am hoping there are also some sorts of community services to support the elderly women if they exist in other areas.

There are always hopes behind the challenges. Difficulties come with opportunities. In my opinion, Japanese people will re-examine the value of cooperation and to appreciate/treasure the human relationship among communities. For instance, solidarity is product of facing hard times together as exhibited in Umaji village.

In conclusion, it is important to gather experts and activists from different backgrounds to discuss and find solutions to overcoming poverty. I am confident that the organizer did very well in the first step. During the JENESYS Programme, I gained lots of knowledge from the sharing and from ideas offered by participants from 15 countries. It is indeed a starting point for all of us to utilize the network in place, to work on issues in our country. As for an action plan in near future, I will contribute my knowledge and skills in NGOs activities on a voluntary basis, to bridge the gap between activists and academia. Further, I am keen on keeping in touch with the 15 wonderful friends I met, to stay informed/updated regarding our projects. We may carry out a collaboration research by employing case studies from different countries in the future. Last but not least, I would like to share an encouraging quote from Winston Churchill: “We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give”. I dedicate my sincere wishes to everyone to live up their dreams on overcoming poverty.

THANK YOU, JAPAN FOUNDATION!
Individual Report

Latheefa Beebi KOYA (Malaysia)
Human rights lawyer, activist, politician and local councilor

Ms. KOYA practices law at Daim & Gamany, a leading public interest and human rights law firm in Malaysia. She is widely involved in various civil society initiatives including on detention without trial, legal aid, migrants, refugees and housing rights. She is a Supreme Council Member of the People’s Justice Party, one of the main opposition parties and was appointed city councilor for Petaling Jaya in 2008.

Malaysia experienced extraordinary economic growth during the last 3 decades, which brought prosperity, the middle class, higher living standards to the majority of the people and the elimination of extreme poverty and hunger. However, incomes are distributed unevenly, for instance, the wealthiest 20 percent of Malaysians control 53.8 percent of the wealth, while the poorest 60 percent of the population controls just 21.3 percent of wealth. The Gini coefficient—a measurement for income inequality where 0 indicates perfect equality and 1.0 indicates perfect inequality—of around 0.49 is among the highest in the region. Further disparities exist along both geographic and ethnic lines, and there are also considerable differences in standards of living, incomes, and access to medical and other social benefits in different parts of the country.

The current economic crisis and its predecessor in 1997/1998 brought higher unemployment, higher prices, and lower incomes. This particularly affected the most vulnerable, not only in rural areas, but also in major urban centers. Nevertheless, there were no large groups of people migrating from the country, and Malaysia’s quality of life remained better than in neighboring Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam and even Thailand.

The Government over the last few decades has been implementing neo liberal policies that are by and large not beneficial to the society as a whole, ill conceived and wasteful, enriching patrons and supporters with inflated, non transparent and one sided projects or concession contracts. Almost all essential profit making and sustainable state services have been privatized with alarming consequences – higher cost and expenditure for the Government and the public.

Further, while over the years the cost of living has increased tremendously, wages and salaries have remained stagnant. The situation is worse for employment at the lower end where there is still no minimum wage and little labor protection. Of course, the situation for migrant labor both regular and irregular is the worst, as they are also prone to exploitation. To make matters even worse, the Government is now under pressure to implement “free trade agreements” that in most cases will not benefit the country.

It is important to state that in the 12th General Election in March 2008, five states including the state of Selangor fell to the opposition coalition, which consists of three political parties including the People’s Justice Party led by Anwar Ibrahim. For the first time, the opposition has the opportunity to implement a more progressive and people friendly reform agenda that is more democratic, inclusive and equitable. At the national level, the opposition made unprecedented huge gains in Parliament (in recent history) and therefore will now have a more effective voice and check and balance. As a People’s Justice Party supreme council member and a local councilor for the city of Petaling Jaya in Selangor, I am in a strong position to shape and implement policies at both the party and city council levels and therefore was looking forward to the training program that promised to be of immense relevance and benefit. With the election results and changes that have taken place, we are now in a good position to re-look at how and where the country is going.

I had hoped to learn more about the above issues in the context of Japan and learn what has been or not working for the country and how they can be applied to Malaysia. As a local councilor, I was interested in learning more about policies that are of concern to the poor and
vulnerable people, how public participation can benefit from the policies and administration of the city council, how the city council can be run efficiently, effectively and cleanly and in compliance with the principles and guidelines for good city living.

As a lawyer, human rights activist, politician and local councilor, whose involvement in various issues and initiatives that include civil and political rights, labor, migrant and refugee rights, poverty and neo-liberalization issues, I was therefore delighted to have participated in and learned from a training program that very strongly mirrors the areas of my work and passion.

And participate and learn I did. Overall, I found the program to be well taught/trained, scheduled, structured and supported – from the moment of applying for the program, to arriving and leaving Japan.

The economic crisis continues to have an impact on the world and Japan, and certainly Malaysia has been similarly affected. It therefore was timely and instructive to learn how Japan, from the central government, the city and communities, to the everyday person, is learning to cope with the crisis. I found that the country's welfare system although commendable, is still underdeveloped compared to the best welfare systems in Europe although it is better than that of Malaysia. It was an eye opener that Japan has got issues of poverty although they are no comparison to other Asian countries like India, the Philippines and Indonesia.

I was concerned with the prospect of part timers and contract workers (especially women and migrant workers) as they would surely be the first to be hit by the economic crisis, a situation that is not different in Malaysia. I found that in Japan – work means everything, and when one loses one's job, the person is condemned, unlike Malaysia, where losing one's job is serious but the person is not condemned.

I also learned various other aspects of city maintenance and cultural preservation that are lacking in Malaysia. I would have been grateful if the program had exposed me to more such experiences as I thought that this was one area that Malaysia could certainly learn from. However, this would probably require a separate and specialized program for city councilors.

It was interesting that after having met members of various Japanese NGOs, I realized that despite the country's development, it lags behind in terms of rights-based NGOs. Nonetheless, I was glad to have met and learned from the small initiatives taken by the different NGOs – Moyai, Kotobukicho, Yokohama Youth Support Station, Second Harvest, the Trade Union, and Komonohashi – and certainly similar initiatives can be replicated by the grassroots communities in Malaysia. I wish to especially commend the Umaji-mura experience. I felt that the initiative serves as a model and template for community development and social entrepreneurship. It was a very inspiring and convincing struggle of how a small village can make it big time.

Lastly, I was pleased to have met the other participants, the “best and brightest” and future leaders of countries in the region. Hopefully we will be able to collaborate for a better and progressive future for all.
Is Japan Poor?

Myo Tha HTET (Myanmar)
Deputy Chief Editor, 7 DAY NEWS JOURNAL

Mr. Htet received his diploma in Business Management from Yangon College of Economics. For five years, he has been working as a leading journalist, writing many articles on political, business and social issues at 7 DAY NEWS JOURNAL. Apart from his work as Deputy Chief Editor, he is actively involving in Social Welfare activities.

“Is Japan poor?”
I believed that only a few Japanese are poor until I saw many sleeping in subway stations at night in December 2008. They were homeless, jobless and living under stress and depression. Japan is facing a load of problems as a result of the global financial crisis since October 2008 that originated in United States of America.

After observing Japan’s economic problem, I have been asking myself about Myanmar’s situation. How about Myanmar and its people?
Are we rich?
“No, Myanmar is a poor country and most of her people live under the poverty line;”
“Some have no food, no home, no family, yet Myanmar culture is still surviving and people help each other even though they are poor”.

Japan has the second largest economy in the world, and is the biggest economic power of Asia. Is this industrialized and modernized country rich or poor? Many would look at you as if you were stupid and say, “Oh! Man, of course Japan is a rich country”. They export IT gadgets and automobiles to the whole world. It has the biggest ship building industry in the world. Its food and some of the culture is very famous in the world such as Karaoke, Japanese foods, Bushido spirit, and Geisha.

Japan has a very strong economy but they have been faced with many economic problems recently because of the world financial crisis. They have laid-off workers from factories and companies and cut back working hours. There are more and more unemployed and homeless people on the streets and in the subway stations.

Nobuhide Minorikawa, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs and Member of the House of Representatives said on our visit to his office on December 17, 2008, that “we discuss the poverty issue when our Diet (Japanese Parliament) is in Session.” He also said that “we have a lot of things to do, but we are aware that the poverty issue is a problem for us” he added. We, the participants from 16 different countries, asked Mr. Minorikawa many questions.

He was a very nice gentleman and smiled at us when he answered our questions. He was educated in United States and his English was excellent.

Poverty situation in Myanmar
We have no official statistic or status-estimation about poverty in Myanmar. Myanmar’s government does not want to disclose to its own public and to the world that Myanmar is a poor country and that there are many people living under the poverty line.

But I have found some data recently from the Statistical Yearbook 2006 which was issued in 2008 by the Central Statistical Organization of the Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development of the government of the Union of Myanmar, and also the Human Development Report 2007/2008 which was published by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) but those do not show the exact numbers regarding the poverty situation in Myanmar. Nevertheless, we can make an educated guess about poverty in Myanmar from these available data.

Myanmar was ranked the world’s 132nd in the Human Development Index (HDI) in UNDP’s Human Development Report 2007/2008. Myanmar’s Human poverty index (HPI-1) is ranked 52nd in the world, with 21.5 percent of total population in poverty.

Recently I asked the officials of the Ministry of Social
Welfare, Relief and Resettlement if we have any statistics or estimates of people living under the poverty line or if we have a poverty problem in Myanmar. They replied briefly “No”.

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<th>Average Monthly Household Expenditure By Group Overall</th>
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<td>Year</td>
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<td>Size of household</td>
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<td>Total household expenditure</td>
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<td>Food and Beverages</td>
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<td>Non-food total</td>
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Kyat is Myanmar’s currency unit and the current (Feb 10, 2008) exchange rate is: 1 US$=1050 Kyats.

According to the Statistical Yearbook 2006, the estimated total population of Myanmar (2005-2006) was 55.40 million, of which the male population was 27.54 million and female, 27.86 million.

Myanmar’s life expectancy at birth (2005) is 60.8 years old and the adult literacy rate (percentage aged 15 and above in 1995-2005) is 89.9, according to UNDP’s Human Development Report 2007/2008.

These figures well indicate that Myanmar is a poor country and that her people live under the poverty line.

However, the difference between Myanmar and Japan is family value and family support. Japan once upheld a similar value system before World War II and even after the war for a certain period of time. But it weakened day by day, until it was totally lost – especially in cities.

Myanmar is fortunate that it still embraces the family’s loving-kindness and support for one another – parents and children, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts and nieces and nephews. Parents do not blame their children much for failing exams or not working soon after finishing undergraduate studies. They always want to see their children living with them forever under their protection. Regardless of the age or professional status of the children, the protective and supportive bondages between parents and children remain strong.

They care more and give much support when their children or their spouses lose their job and encounter bad experiences. They offer a warm and kind heart all the time to the victims and empower them to return to life in the society. Therefore, we do not care much about losing a job, failing an exam or fighting with other people. We stand by our blood relatives. There is a Myanmar proverb that says that the blood gives the strength and the kindness to help one another. The whole of Myanmar, more or less as a nation, believes in such a value system.

What I saw in Japan?

Japan is one of the rich and industrialized countries in the world and Tokyo is the most costly city in the world, many tourists said. What I saw about Tokyo is that it’s a clean and modernized city. At the same time I saw that people from Tokyo are in a rush and hardworking for their daily lives and survival. They do not have enough time for family and environment. They just work and do it for their future.

In our programme, we not only discussed the poverty issues of Japan but also our own country’s poverty situation. We shared our experiences and the nature of our workplaces. We visited some Japanese Non-profit Organizations (NPO) such as the Kamonohashi Project, a young Japanese NPO challenging the child prostitution problem in Cambodia, and Second Harvest Japan, a non-profit corporation that collects food donations and delivers them to people in need and agencies that serve such people.

In Japan, organizations who or which want to help people in need can register themselves as NPO if they follow certain standards under the Japanese laws.

I do much appreciate those two organizations for doing their best for people in need. Actually most Japanese do not want to seek support from other people and organizations. They want to work for themselves or at work places and earn their money for their living.

I think that we can emulate and model after this kind of NPOs in Myanmar. I wrote a story about those two NPOs to educate the readers that we can do something for our poor Myanmar people too.

Japanese media and newspapers usually do not want to cover much about the poverty issue, but today they understand that they need to write continuously about it in order to encourage the informed debate about what the government should do next for the people who are in need, and to tell to the readers which organizations are doing good for needy people.

Japan is famous with its own culture and economy but now needs to go the next step with good policy and good direction.

Japanese must find their own ways to return to the good and smooth road of economy and culture.

Follow up program

I wrote a series in my paper 7 Day News, discussing my experiences in Japan for four continuous weeks. Not only about the poverty issue and workshop but also about what I saw and learnt from Japan.

However, the issue of poverty is not yet being fully tackled in Myanmar. Myanmar Buddhist monasteries
and some NGOs are providing assistance such as food, education and shelter to the homeless and orphans – those including HIV-infected children.

Actually Myanmar is a poor country and everybody knows that. Many Myanmar workers have been going abroad to seek jobs. Most of them work in what are known as “the 3-D jobs” – dirty, dangerous and difficult. They won’t go to another country if they have enough food and a job. The people of Myanmar always want to live with their family all the time.

Therefore, in order to fight poverty in Myanmar, we must uplift awareness of the safety net such as regular income, which can feed the family’s basic needs. We must learn a lot from industrialized countries including Japan, on how to set the budget and how to cover and run the entire society’s with a social inclusion approach.

To spread awareness of fighting poverty as a whole, we journalists must play a pivotal role in the society such as constantly writing about such issues and sometimes holding workshops where we can discuss how to overcome this poverty in our lifetime. All stakeholders can take part in fighting poverty, in our time.

Currently, we can only educate people and our readers about how to overcome poverty through the experiences of other countries. We can visualize poverty by comparing and contrasting experiences of others with ours, and set a goal for our country’s policy and direction.

Right now my idea may just be a dream, but we must progress accordingly as I mentioned above. Journalists can lobby politicians and statesmen about what needs to be done to fight poverty.

The last thing is that poverty is not an issue for one country but for the world as a whole, so we must fight together to overcome it.

We, Vietnam and Myanmar, South Korea and Japan, Australia and New Zealand, Cambodia and Laos, Thailand and the Philippines, Brunei and Indonesia, India and China, Malaysia and Singapore… we can all work together in our fight against poverty. Hold hands together! Look at that, poverty is ready to be run out!

Myself

I’m an editor of 7 Day NEWS, a local prominent private news weekly in Myanmar which is based in Yangon, the former capital of Myanmar. I was one of participants from 16 different countries who attended the JENESYS East Asia Future Leaders Programme 2008-2009 “Overcoming Poverty through a Social Inclusion Approach” December 9-19, 2008 which was organized by The Japan Foundation.

There are more than 100 private news weeklies and more than 100 private magazines in Myanmar.

7 Day News is a famous news weekly of Myanmar and the top among news weeklies in term of circulation. We mostly cover social and business news in our paper but we rarely touch on political news. I have to say however, that we have never covered the poverty issue in Myanmar as seriously as Japanese newspapers have covered the poverty issue in Japan today.

In Myanmar we have a Press Scrutiny and Registration Department under the Information Ministry and we have to submit a week ahead, whatever we write in our paper. Sometimes it is difficult to receive permission when we write about people’s sufferings due to poverty or other unfortunate news about Myanmar and its people. Therefore, we, editors and journalists, need to take this into consideration when we work. However, I have been working as a journalist for almost ten years and I am friendly with all walks of people including some high ranking government officials.
Individual Report

Caleb STARRENBURG (New Zealand)
Freelance Journalist/Freelance Communications Consultant/Museum Communications and Writer, Auckland Museum

Mr. Starrenburg received his Bachelor of Communication Studies from Auckland University of Technology. In 2004, He was awarded “New Zealand Beach Education Instructor of the Year.” Currently, he has three statuses: 1) as a freelance journalist, writing for a variety of publications, 2) as a freelance communications consultant, assisting YMCA and the Foundation for Youth Development to raise awareness amongst political issues affecting the youth sector, 3) as Communications & Writer at Auckland Museum telling stories.

New Zealand Poverty Situation
There is no official poverty indicator in New Zealand, and no formal agreement on how to measure poverty. However, within the New Zealand context poverty is often calculated as 60% of the median income after housing costs.

Using this indicator the poverty threshold for a household with two adults and two children lies at NZ$442 per week or NZ$23,000 annually in 2008. For a sole parent with one child it is NZ$286 per week or NZ$14,900 annually.

This poverty indicator reveals there are currently 550,000 people in poverty in New Zealand, or one in seven households, including 170,000 children.

Some groups are more likely than others to be in poverty: beneficiaries, children and youth, Maori and Pacific peoples, and sole parents are more likely to experience poverty than other groups.

Being in poverty in New Zealand means; experiencing hunger and food insecurity, poor health outcomes, reduced life expectancy, debt, and unaffordable or inferior housing.

New Zealand Social Welfare System
Social welfare is an important component of New Zealand society and a significant political issue. It concerns the provision of benefits and services by the state. Together with fiscal welfare and occupational welfare, it goes to make up the social policy of New Zealand.

New Zealand Social Welfare provisions broadly include:

Accommodation:
The Accommodation Supplement

Disability and Illness:
Sickness Benefit
Invalids Benefit

Education:
Student Allowance
Student Loans
Scholarships

Families:
Child Support
Working for Families
Domestic Purposes Benefit
Superannuation

Unemployment:
Unemployment Benefit

Individual Context
I work as a journalist in a freelance communications role. My particular area of interest is the non-profit and youth sectors; young people in New Zealand are particularly vulnerable to the influence of poverty. Throughout 2008 I worked with The Youth Alliance, an umbrella group representing youth-focused NGOs, to lobby the government for greater policy concessions.

As a journalist I’ve also worked to underscore development issues, both on a domestic and international scale.

I work as a writer at Auckland Museum. The goal of the museum is to tell stories that stimulate mind and spirit, and to enhance understanding of ourselves and the world we live in.

Observations of the JENESYS Programme
Through my participation in the JENESYS Programme I
came to the conclusion that Japan is both unique in its poverty context, and is a clear example of the globalised trend of urbanisation and economic deregulation. Japan's 'company' model of lifetime employment allowed the nation to rebuild itself in only a space of decades to boast the world's second biggest economy. Eventually however, a programme of labour deregulation was embarked upon to increase international competitiveness. Following the deregulation of the labour market, there was no corresponding reform of the welfare system and no development of the nation's civil society. This has resulted in an increasing population of the 'working poor,' non-regular employees.

In order to address the expanding issue of poverty, a social inclusion approach is required. It is my observation that the social welfare system in Japan, including Public Assistance and Social Insurance, needs to be reformed to make it more effective, efficient and accessible, particularly to non-regular workers, single mothers and the elderly.

The Japanese government should also take measures to encourage the growth of Japan's civil society. This could include increasing government financial and logistical assistance to the NPO sector, and making it easier for NPOs to apply for tax-deductible status. A public awareness campaign could also be run, promoting voluntarism and philanthropy.

Benefits of the JENESYS Programme
I significantly deepened my understanding of the Japanese employment and social welfare systems. As a writer and communications consultant involved with youth-based NGOs, it was also valuable to visit and observe NPOs working to develop themselves within Japan's civil sector.

It was particularly interesting to visit the Umaji Village project, where attempts to foster a sense of community, which has been largely removed through the process of urbanisation, have been successful in establishing a successful business model and reversing urban drift.

Learning from the experiences of participants of the programme was also incredibly valuable; I gained many insights into poverty situations and work of the civil society in countries throughout South East Asia.

Personal Action Plan
I plan to use the incredible wealth of experience and knowledge I have gained to assist me in my role as a museum writer, as I seek to 'tell stories that stimulate mind and spirit, and enhance understanding of ourselves and the world we live in.'

As a development writer and communications consultant for New Zealand NGOs, I will implement the ideas I gained from my conversations with JENESYS participants. I intend to remain in contact with JENESYS participants, in order to continue the flow of ideas and knowledge.

Follow-up Programme
The JENESYS Programme successfully identified sources and symptoms of poverty in Japan. A follow up programme could be organised to examine practicable solutions to specific elements of Japan's poverty situation: for example, a programme looking at care for the elderly, employment opportunities for single parents, greater union representation for non-regular workers, or growth of the civil sector.

There should also be an investigation of opportunities to organise similar programmes in the counties represented by the recent JENESYS programmes. This programme could allow for a thorough examination of that nation's poverty situation, while facilitating debate on possible solutions.
Towards an ASIA-MURA

Mark Lawrence B. CRUZ (Philippines)
Coordinator, Volunteer Management Program (GK 1MB), Gawad Kalinga Development Foundation, Inc.

Mr. Cruz received his Bachelor of Science in Business Management from Ateneo de Manila University in 2002 and he is a candidate of Master's degree in Philosophy at the same institute. After working as assistant instructor at Department of Philosophy, Ateneo de Manila University and coordinator at Gawad Kalinga Ateneo Coordinating Office, he got his current position as a Coordinator for the Volunteer Management Program at Gawad Kalinga Development Foundation, Inc., establishing partnership with educational institutions and civic groups, and training the expecting managers among volunteers of this foundation.

Part 1: Poverty and GK in the Philippines

The Philippines has been poor for the longest time. As a colony of Spain, we were made subjects to a foreign king in our own land. The Philippines was declared property of the crown of Spain and a domain of the Catholic Church. And so, the Filipino was in effect captive in his own motherland. This state of affairs lasted for almost 300 years. Our freedom from Spanish rule was cut short by the arrival of the Americans who stayed for a good part of the 20th century. The rulers changed, but the plight of the ordinary Filipinos did not: many were still landless and homeless.

Since our independence in 1946, we have been engaged in the journey of building a nation that every Filipino can be proud of. To this day, a nation of 85 million people spread across an archipelago of 7,107 islands, is engaged in a struggle to liberate itself from poverty. A third of our people are below the poverty line and an estimated 80% are still landless after two massive land reforms. 40% our people are still considered food poor who have to live with involuntary hunger on a daily basis.

This brand of poverty has always been approached from the vantage point of economics. But after public spending of billions of pesos on poverty eradication and receiving so much more in foreign aid, I begin to wonder why is it that so many Filipinos are still poor. Why is it that after so much talk about trickle-down economics, the poorest of the poor (the landless, homeless and hungry) continue to remain where they are at the bottom of society? I continue to hope that this approach to poverty, with its great promises of a better quality of life, will come to fruition in the nearest possible time. The poor have been waiting for so long and have suffered the most deprivation. They must not be made to wait any longer.

But in the midst of this great poverty, in one of the largest slum areas in the Philippines (estimated 200,000 families, a community of 1 million of the poorest of the poor), a bunch of ordinary Filipinos dared to do something different. They approached poverty from another angle and proceeded along a new path. They did not see low incomes or poverty lines among the poor, instead they saw in them shattered lives and compromised dreams. They did not see in them beggars who waited for alms or pity, instead they saw in them friends who are lost and broken who are in need of presence and friendship. And so in their resolve to change things for the better, they worked on building dreams, mending relationships, and restoring dignity. In other words, they approached poverty from the angle of human relationships and behavior. Thus was the beginning of the movement called GK (Gawad Kalinga) which to date has built some 40,000 homes for the poor in 1,700 communities in just four years (since 2003). This movement is all about ending poverty within...
one generation in a bid to rebuild a nation that has been broken for so long.

This movement is driven by a volunteer army that is estimated to be 1,000,000 strong and is spread all over the country and key areas abroad (United States of America, Singapore, Australia to name a few). It is a movement that is supported by an extensive network of partnerships that includes the whole spectrum of society: individuals, corporations, governments, non-government organizations, church, academe, and civic groups. GK as a movement has been able to mobilize a massive involvement that cuts across traditional social divides. GK has been able to forge a massive united front against poverty. It has generated enough speed, scale, and impact to measure up to the challenge of uplifting the lives of some 5 million Filipino families. The problem of poverty is so massive that our response cannot be small.

The agenda of GK is captured by its 24-year campaign called GK777. The campaign to uplift the lives of 5 million landless, homeless, and hungry Filipinos began in 2003, as a phase of social justice. In this phase, the concern was to liberate the Filipino from the mindset of injustice: landlessness in one's motherland, homelessness in your homeland, hunger in a country of great abundance. This first phase ends in 2010 with the celebration of the 1st World Hope Day to be held in Manila. It will be gathering of 5 million people: both the poor and those who are journeying with them. When the poor and the non-poor journey towards a common cause, hope is made real. This celebration also launches the second phase of social artistry where the communities built (estimated to be at 7,000-10,000 by then) will now strive towards a life of creativity and productivity. The long history of poverty has robbed these people of the opportunity to explore and express their highest potentials. In this 2nd phase of GK777 we will focus on creating the right conditions for the poor to flourish. The last push of the campaign will be towards 2024 when we can now make a push for social progress.

Why talk of progress only at the last moment? We realized that it is futile to talk about it when so many of our citizens are poor—it is like running a marathon with a dead weight strapped on one's back. Only in an atmosphere of justice and productivity can progress truly flourish. But at the heart of this 24-year campaign is our solemn hope that is anchored on the children: a child born in a GK community in 2003 will be 24 by 2024, an adult who might just well be the first one in their family to come out of poverty. This 24-year campaign seeks to ensure that the poor in 2003 will be made un-poor by 2024.

GK is a journey built on the spirit of leaving no one behind. Its volunteers and partners embrace this as their lifestyle and inspiration. The current momentum of building communities for the poor carries with it the energy and inspiration needed to create culture of caring and sharing, the kind of culture that is the antidote to the greed and fear that has triggered and sustained our current economic situation. We hope that in proceeding this way we may also shed light and share the inspiration to other nations most especially in these trying and difficult times.
Part 2: Experiences and Insights from Japan

The JENESYS Program was my introduction and, as it turns out, my crash course about Japan. The journey created new perspectives that allowed me to see beyond certain predispositions and limitations not only about Japan but also about Asia and the world. Being immersed in a foreign world unconcealed the Asian spirit in my Filipino soul. It awakened the global citizen that I never realized was in me all this time. The worth of that 11-day experience is enough to last me a lifetime but I would like to gather them around three points.

First point: It was an experience of Japan beyond Tokyo and Mt. Fuji. As a foreigner who has never traveled to Japan before, Tokyo and Mt. Fuji are my icons for Japan. My ignorance only allowed me a vision of Japan as a metropolitan nation (Tokyo) which has a towering pride built on rich history (Mt. Fuji). Add to it samurais, ninjas, Toyota and Honda, there is really little I know about Japan and its peoples. But this trip introduced me to Shikoku Island, a long way beyond Tokyo and Mt. Fuji. The journey to this southern island allowed me a glimpse into rural and historical Japan. The feudal castles of Matsuyama and Kochi provided a vantage point into Japan’s long history of lords and samurais, an era that is both noble and brutal. They stood in the middle of modern neighborhoods as silent, yet firm, witnesses of Japan’s long history as though reminding everyone that all this progress came at a cost that was not cheap nor easy.

The excursion to Shikoku also included stays at ryokans (traditional inns) and, inevitably, opportunities for baths at the onsen (hot spring). These visits also brought with it the opportunity to wear a yukata and eat traditional Japanese food. The trip showed me novel ways of dining, dressing, sleeping (oh, the lovely futon!), and even bathing that is uniquely Japanese. But beneath these varied experiences was unity expressed in underlying demands that makes them all so Japanese: slow and deliberate movement (how could one brisk walk in a yukata and slippers or gobble up in a few seconds a full teishoku with just chopsticks?), small talk while waiting for the next dish to be served or while soaking in an onsen, the ever present sense of art, order and punctuality (futons prepared at precise moments, dishes served at appropriate intervals), and much more. When put together it is the little details of the main feature, which gave the trip its Japanese color and flavor.

Both in Shikoku and in Tokyo, there were many other places I visited that added to my icons for Japan, each of them unique and unforgettable in their own way: Katsurahama beach where stood a statue of a proud Sakamoto Ryoma, an hour’s magical walk through Ryugado caves, a challenging hike up the 1,765 steps of Kompira Shrine, the grand history of Dogo Onsen, the impressive permanent collection of the Tokyo National Museum, the thousand and one trinkets at Asakusa, the dizzying walk and ride on the Tokyo Metro, the beer and sake that accompanied the sushi in Ueno and even just the passing glimpse of places and peoples along the way...these moments, no matter how short-lived, left a lasting impression on me of a Japan well beyond Tokyo and Mt. Fuji. But perhaps, the greatest anti-thesis to these quintessential icons is that of Umaji village in Kochi Prefecture.

Second point: JENESYS was an experience that showed us a Japan beyond the economic superpower that it is. Our trip exposed us not to the broad hallways of money or the market arena which make Japan a world-leader. Rather, we made our way into narrow streets to meet, listen, and discuss with ordinary people who are doing extraordinary things to make lives better for the homeless, hungry, and disenfranchised in Japanese society. These sessions usually began with discussions about project details and end up as
a lively discussion and exchange of ideas. As it turns out, these exposure trips to non-profit organizations (NPOs) became moments of sincere and honest encounters among people from across Asia and Oceania who were genuinely concerned for the plight of the poor. The questions asked and answers given revealed the innate connection of each participant and their Japanese counterparts. The visits to Moyai, Kotobukicho, Yokohama Youth Support Station, Second Harvest, the Trade Union, and Kamonohashi came together to paint a canvass of a vibrant and hopeful Japanese civil society that has a long way to go before it reaches maturity. For the seasoned NPOs among us, these encounters were privileged moments of witnessing the birth of civil society in Japan.

These exciting and interesting encounters were set against the backdrop of a poverty made surreal by the larger context of Japanese prosperity and wealth. Perhaps, this contrast was the unspoken motor of our discussions. One of the greatest insights from this trip is that poverty does exist in Japan and that it is about to get worse. Of course, the brand of poverty we saw was in most ways incomparable to the scale and magnitude of poverty from where I come from (or from India and Thailand for that matter). But somehow, when poverty strikes, it leaves a common mark on people regardless of race, gender, or age. While material deprivation is most obvious in all cases, what stays are images of isolation, despair and humiliation. When poverty strikes, it robs people of their dignity and honor as human beings. No one was born only to become homeless or hungry. Poverty is the antithesis to the honor of human life. But to see these images in Japan was truly something else. Our reactions to discovering homeless or hungry people in Japan ranged from surprise to disbelief, from pity to compassion, from confusion to compulsion to act. Our journey into this strange world was made comprehensible by the invaluable companionship of those who have gone ahead of us - the NPOs and their dedicated leaders. They accepted such reality when very few of their own people were even aware. They took on the challenge of responding to their needs while most of Japan cared too little to even know more about it.

But our initiation into the world of the poor was brought to its greatest height when we were made to understand its machinery. It all starts with joblessness and from there a chain reaction is triggered that cause people to fall into the cracks of an otherwise effective Japanese social security system. In discussing the plight of the poor, our lecturers inevitably revealed to us the unique workings and intimate connections of employment and life in Japan. Equally shocking to the reality of poverty was the principle of life-long employment. Now that this system is being shaken by the realities of modern economics and current recession, it is wreaking havoc in the lives of those who lose their jobs, specially the older men. Being jobless is the first step to a series of misfortunes that begins by being on welfare to being homeless to being hungry. And somewhere along the way, the poor in Japan become isolated. The lack of alternative support systems (family, friends, NPOs) was a stark void that most of us took notice of. Why were these absent? This question then led us to the realities that compounded the situation: declining family ties, job-centered lives, meritocracy and materialism, a civil society that was never needed, a government that provided everything to the point of creating dependency and dampening civil empowerment.

This aspect of our trip was both saddening but also hopeful. We tried to see beyond the details and read between the lines. Our alarm and concern for the rising incidence of poverty was met with the dynamism of ideas and prospects for change. We drew hope from the few who dared to rise up to the challenge. Our forays into the unpopular realms of Japan brought with them the privilege of meeting the remarkable men and women at the frontiers in the battle against poverty in Japan. It is their passion and dedication that triggered our ideas and hopes. So long as they are there, the poor in Japan will never be truly alone. Our brief encounters were simply not enough to forge plans but were definitely enough to lay the foundations for future collaboration. It is our hope that our encounters provided our Japanese NPO counterparts with hope, inspiration, and a perspective that they are not alone in the battle that they are fighting; that they have companions in the 16 countries that were present. The key to surviving these rough times is to stay together and to not leave anyone behind. That in these trying times, it is not just government who is to be trusted (or blamed?) for a solution but that if every Japanese citizen is involved they can make a difference if given the inspiration, chance, and support to make it happen. Somehow, in-between the cracks of this faltering economic system there is a resounding desire to work together, to be in community, as in the spirit of the mura, as the first step towards a better Japan.

Finally, the trip gave us something beyond Japan. It gave us the gift of friendship from 16 countries. While most of the trip was spent on knowing Japan, in between the tightly knit schedule we also had the opportunity to glimpse into the world of other countries. In this trip, I began seeing beyond my own country. Almost comically, a sinking ship in Manila now matters to my friend from
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Australia simply because I might be on that boat! Or if Thailand elects a new PM, it now matters to me because it may spell the difference between being able to land or not land in Bangkok. Simply put, foreign affairs have become personal concerns for each of the 20 participants. Japan is famous in my country for building a lot of bridges and roads. And I think it did the same thing for me during this trip. The JENESYS program put me on an expressway into understanding Japan and its challenges on poverty but it also opened up side roads and detours into the world of my Asian neighbors. It was a great privilege to meet the best from these countries, the future leaders of Asia. And no matter how small and partially significant we are right now, we hope to live up to our destiny of being future leaders and really make the difference that has long been spoken of. Forging these connections could not have come at a better time. It is very important to rekindle this connection in a setting of an impeding once-in-a-century global economic crisis.

This crisis was triggered by a sophisticated form of greed and propelled by fear. And people the world over are just so afraid and insecure. But as we build bridges and roads of understanding and friendship, we somehow feel less afraid because of the assurance that we are not alone. Somehow, in doing what each of us is doing for our own countries we feel that we can ask our friends in Asia and Oceania for support and encouragement. Because of this trip we are beginning to see this corner of this world as our neighborhood, our community, and in so many ways maybe one big little Asia-mura. And that is one thing we are taking home with affection, a gift well beyond Japan from each of the 16 countries here represented.

Part 3: Action Plan from the JENESYS Experience

On the individual and immediate level, I have been integrating the experiences and insights from Japan into the talks and presentations that I give here and abroad. It has served as a reference and background for the global work of GK. In particular, I have been highlighting the following points:

1. Poverty in Japan. That poverty has emerged in Japan and that even an economically mature nation is now finding itself besieged by hunger and homelessness. This brings home the universality of poverty and everyone is affected by it. Audiences are initially in disbelief and even in doubt when this topic is raised and my direct experience of it has made me into a credible informant (at least for most of the time).

2. Japanese NPOs. That in response to this emerging poverty there is also the advent of a young Japanese civil society.

3. The Umaji-mura experience. Umaji is a model and template for community development and social entrepreneurship. It is a very inspiring and convincing story of how a small village can make it big time. And behind the success is a deep-seated sense of communal pride and identity, the spirit of the mura.

It is my hope that people will have more interest and even be inspired to do something about the situation if an opportunity comes along.

On a more institutional front, the proposal which I would like to pursue would be along the lines of empowering Japanese Youth and catalyzing Japanese civil society. In particular, I would like to propose along the lines of sharing the experience and inspiration of GK to Japanese young leaders and NPO leaders.

1. Proposal 1: Empowering the Young Leaders
   a. Description: a program which will seek to empower young leaders of Japan to take a more active role in society.
   b. Objectives: The program seeks to:
      i. Provide an venue where young leaders of Japan can connect with each other and create meaningful avenues for cooperation;
      ii. Create a meaningful encounter between young leaders from Japan and other Asian countries who are currently engaged in active roles in society's development.
   c. Participants: Young leaders of Japan and other Asian countries, ages 21-35, who are actively engaged in social development. Number of participants 20-30 max.
   d. Implementation Partner: Gawad Kalinga in the Philippines
   e. Methods: the program's objectives will be achieved via the following activities spread over a 7-14 day period in the Philippines:
      i. Keynote lectures and discussions on issues like poverty, youth leadership, nation building, inspiration and motivation, etc.
      ii. Presentations from participants
      iii. Study trip to the Philippines to work with Gawad Kalinga
      iv. Guided writing of paper and proposal to be submitted for implementation in Japan
2. Proposal 2: Catalyzing Civil Society

a. Description: A program (not just an event or activity) which will seek to contribute to the development of a Japanese civil society.

b. Objectives:
   i. Provide an opportunity for like-minded and like-hearted people who are working with NPO's in Japan to meaningfully connect with each other;
   ii. Provide an opportunity for these people to build up the knowledge, skills, and networks needed to build a more mature Japanese civil society;
   iii. Come up with concrete action plans to sustain the gains of the program;
   iv. Provide Japanese NPO's with an opportunity to draw inspiration and learning from their counterparts in other Asian countries.

c. Participants. Participants to this program must more or less meet this profile:
   i. Meaningfully involved in NPO or related work in Japan;
   ii. Sufficiently informed about the poverty and social situation of Japan;
   iii. Willing and open to collaborate with other NPO's in Japan.

d. Implementing partners: NGO's represented in JENESYS 2008

e. Methods: The objectives will be achieved via the following activities spread over a period of 7-14 days in the Philippines and other countries represented in JENESYS
   i. Lectures and discussions: an overview of the status quo of Japanese civil society; who are they? What are they doing? Where are they operating? What has been their impact? The role of civil society in the life of nations, etc.
   ii. Presentation from participants
   iii. Study tours and interaction with NGO leaders from the Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, South Korea, etc.
   iv. Forging formal partnerships among NGO's and NPO's towards future cooperation.
   v. Guided paper writing and proposal making for publication and submission for implementation in Japan.
Individual Report

Sandra Puliran GANI, RSW (Philippines)
Senior Facilitator, Community and Family Services International (CFSI)

Ms. Gani is a Registered Social Worker. She received her Bachelor of Science in Social Work from Mindanao State University in 2000, and Master in Teaching Social Work from The Catholic University of America in 2009. Since 2005, she has been working as a Community Organizer, involving Food Assistance Project, PRO-CHILD Care Project, and Mindanao Youth and Leadership Project organized by Community and Family Services International (CFSI).

I. Poverty situation and social welfare
(Philippine setting)

Poverty is the condition of having no adequate food or money needed to survive, based on the acceptable standard of living in a society. Persons are considered to be in poverty if they cannot meet the level of income set by the government as the poverty line. Last year (2008) the Philippine population was 96 million, with roughly 29 million living in poverty. The causes of poverty in the country include: slow economic growth, high unemployment rate, rapid increase of population, and unstable peace and order.

The poverty situation in Philippines is complex. In 2007, the country’s economy was ranked by the International Monetary Fund as the 37th largest economy. At the same time, it was also the fastest-growing economy in Southeast Asia, posting a real GDP growth rate of 7.3%. However, economic growth has not been high enough to keep up with the rapid increase in population. The unemployment rate of 7.3% is also high compared to that of Japan, which is only 3.8%. In addition, recurrent armed conflicts in the southern part of the Philippines contribute to negative impact on all forms of capital. In terms of human capital, conflict results in the loss of lives, displacement, increased infant mortality and decline in market and investment levels.

With all of these challenges, what does the government do to improve social welfare in the Philippines? The Department of Social Welfare and Development is the main government agency mandated to provide assistance to local government units, non-government organizations, other national government agencies, people’s organizations, and other members of civil society in effectively implementing programs, projects and services that will lessen poverty and empower disadvantaged individuals, families and communities for an improved quality of life. It has several programs, all aimed at improving the life of the poor. Nevertheless, how can the DSWD address all the needs of the poor, considering its insufficient budget to work for 29 million poor people? This is why non-profit government organizations have to intervene.

Community and Family Services International (CFSI) is one of the NPOs that operate here in the Philippines. It is a humanitarian organization committed to peace and social development, with particular interest in the psychosocial dimension. As a social worker and an NPO worker, my job is to assist the underprivileged and marginalized to become self-reliant and confident. I also provide education the less fortunate so that they will be aware of what is happening around them. One way of achieving these goals is to engage the beneficiaries and all the stakeholders in project implementation instead of “spoon-feeding” them the project. The people should always be consulted because it is they who know what is best for their lives. By engaging the stakeholders in the project, they will have a sense of ownership and in some way I can say they become empowered.

II. Personal observation on poverty
(Japan setting)

Poverty is new in Japan compared to the Philippines. The rate is still small in number but its rapid increase is alarming.
Most of those who experience poverty are the elders who no longer work, women (especially solo parents), the divorced, disabled, and non-regular workers. There are two factors, which contribute to poverty issues. The first is economic recession and the second is imbalance in dealing with employees. The first factor is very crucial in that the Japanese government has no absolute control. However, the second factor is something the government can work on to ease the poverty situation. Based on the discussions held during the 11-day JENESYS programme, I noticed that women workers do not have equal opportunities to men and that women are more vulnerable to poverty. Despite these challenges, I still believe that Japan can survive – it is just a matter of revisiting the policies to determine what policies need to be changed to meet the present situation, and to revive the culture of helping one another so that no one is left behind. Japan has so much to offer in terms of resolving poverty. Please see the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Philippines</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Japan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developing country</td>
<td>Classification</td>
<td>Developed country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>Unemployment rate (2007)</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiencing recurrent armed conflict</td>
<td>Peace and Order situation</td>
<td>Low crime rate; no armed conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96 million</td>
<td>Population (July 2008)</td>
<td>127 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.991 %</td>
<td>Pop. Growth Rate (2008)</td>
<td>-0.139 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$ 24.9 billion</td>
<td>Budget (revenues)</td>
<td>$ 1.462 trillion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 million</td>
<td>Number of poor people</td>
<td>Less than 2 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CIA- The World Factbook except for categories nation classification and peace and order situation

III. Recommendations

➢ The government should make labor policies that will protect the interest of both men and women.
➢ For NPOs: educate the public regarding poverty issues by using tri-media; facilitate symposiums; and educate the poor regarding their rights toward the government.
➢ Strengthen partnerships among NPOs and link with international NPOs to exchange views on how to address poverty.
➢ Conduct consultation or focus group discussions with the poor to be able to get concrete ideas on how to be of help to them. It is not good to spoon-feed them with ideas. Note that many of those poor people were working people before and they used to have their own daily work activities when they were young. We need to get them busy again, to bring back a sense of normalcy in their lives.
➢ In terms of NPOs having limited funds, I suggest that the NPOs conduct a fund raising campaign, which I would like to name “Save 100 Lives”. In this campaign, NPOs would collaborate with several commercial establishments (hotels, grocery stores, pharmacy, and others) to allow the NPOs to put coin banks on the counter tops. There also needs to be public awareness regarding the Save 100 Lives Project so that people can give or donate any amount. The kind-hearted people could just drop their donations in the coin bank for the NPO to collect anytime. I am naming it the Save 100 Lives Project because the target is for each coin donated to be a denomination not lower than 100 yen.

IV. My learning

Twenty people from 16 different countries participated in the JENESYS Programme on Poverty and the Social Inclusion Approach. Each participant was unique in terms of specialization, interest in the program, line of thinking, status in life, and culture. But no matter how different we were, we still joined the program and pulled our ideas together to help one country as well as to build bonds and partnerships with others. To that end, I can say that we succeed halfway. The group we had in this program was precious.

The field visits gave me so many ideas about creating livelihood projects from raw materials available in the community. The Philippines is rich in natural resources, it is just a matter of exploring what products and what designs we can create from indigenous materials.

Lastly, the NPO should take the lead, however. Bear in mind, that this is not a competition but rather a collaboration to save more than 100 lives.
“Overcoming Poverty – an Act of Social Responsibility”

Norhayati Binte Mohammad ALI (Singapore)
Programme Manager, MENDAKI Social Enterprise Network Singapore Pte Ltd, a training arm of Yayasan MENDAKI.

Ms. Norhayati received her Diploma in Business Administration from Singapore Polytechnic in 2000, and her 2nd Upper Class Honours Degree in the same area from University of Wales in 2003. She is currently working at MENDAKI Social Enterprise Network Singapore Pte Ltd, in charge of employment and improvement of working skills for workers in Singapore who are affected by the economic structural changes and unemployment.

1. Introduction

Singapore, lying almost on the equator with a total land area of 682 square kilometers, has hardly any of its population living below the poverty line. A city island with an overall population of 4.8 million (as of June 2008), poverty in Singapore is mainly referred to households with a total income falling below $1500 per month.

The Singapore government ensures that every Singaporean, regardless of family background, has a stake in the nation's progress. It takes all possible steps and efforts in assuring it closes all gaps to disallow any disadvantaged to be deprived from making a good life.

Education and housing are among Singapore’s largest subsidies to its citizens. Singapore believes that education is the root to every success. Though it is not a solution, education acts as a tool in achieving success. Schools in Singapore operate on the principle that no child should be deprived of an education because he or she cannot afford it. Financial assistance schemes are made available to students whose families are unable to afford school fees, textbooks, uniforms, transport or even extra tuition. Scholarships and bursaries are also provided for the best students, regardless of their socio-economic background. Enrichment programs, tuition schemes, reading and literacy programs, family upgrading and other programs are also introduced as part of improvement and empowerment programs.

At the workforce level, lifelong learning is widely promoted for individuals and families to equip themselves relevantly in order to gain financial independence and self-sustainability.

Workers and individuals are greatly encouraged to upgrade their skills to stay competitive in the job market, and to avoid being retrenched. Companies receive subsidies and funding from the government when they send their staff for training. Workers who attend skills upgrading courses also enjoy subsidies from the government.

The subsidized housing program in Singapore is an important way the government builds social cohesion and provides a stake for Singaporeans. To date, 91% of households in Singapore own their own homes (Singapore Social Statistics In Brief 2008, by Ministry of Community, Youth and Sports). This has given a majority of Singaporeans a sense of ownership and belonging, and sweeps out the homeless society.

2. Japan in Observation

Japan is one of the leading nations in the advancement of science and technology. It is known as a country rich in culture and custom practices with friendly, committed and disciplined people who take pride in their rules and laws.

I observed a sense of individuality and self-responsibility among the Japanese. They prefer to keep and solve their household issues to themselves, so as not to allow others to know what the household is going through. Unconsciously, this act leads to the problems remaining unsolved or deteriorating. This fact was evident in the relationship between the founder of “Moyai”, a Non-Profit Organization (NPO) Independent Life Support Centre, Mr. Makoto Yuasa and a female victim of domestic violence, Ms. Kaori Yamaguchi. If this continues, the possibility for such cases similar to increase could be quite demanding.
The Kotobuki Supporters Exchange Association or the Kotobuki-cho experience gave me an overview on the homeless scene in Japan and helped me to understand factors that might have contributed to the poverty rate of elderly men in Japan.

I learnt how the “shame” culture could affect one individual life. As explained by Mr. Yukio Takazawa, the Chief of the Secretariat for Kotobuki Supporters Exchange Association, that when a Japanese man leaves his hometown to find a job in the city, he “cannot” return to the hometown unless he returns with a successful career. The acceptance and support from family here seemed to be missing. One of the homeless male residents in Kotobuki-cho, who worked as an odd-job laborer, proudly claimed that he was “happy to be away from home and be independent”. If this trend is allowed to continue, this could be a worrying factor as it could contribute to the increase in the number of single-mothers.

The rise of part-time and temporary employment in Japan is very worrying as this would prevent the people from gaining full financial independence and slow down the achievement for self-sustainability. As stated in the handbook “Social Security in Japan 2007” the majority of the part-time and temporary employees are among the younger generation and women. As the younger generation includes the future leaders, without a proper career start, it will slow down the momentum of shaping this group early, in order to lead the future.

I noticed the enlightening side of Japan in the context of a small-populated village in Shikoku Island, the Umaji-mura or Umaji Village. The spirit of togetherness and sense of community is present in this village. Its dedicated Mayor ensures that the villagers are not deprived of making a good life for themselves. There is no unemployment in the village and no one is homeless. Umaji-mura is a village development which utilizes the local resources. It produces a range of products made from its own-grown citrus fruit yuzu. The strong sense of community, commitment, determination and dedication has also led the village to move to other areas of developments in for example agriculture, forestry and tourism.

3. Recommendations for Japan

During the Introductory Lecture and Discussions on the first day of the program, with Advisor, Dr Aya K. ABE, Senior Researcher at the National Institute of Population and Society Security Research, poverty in Japan was discussed. In this country, poverty reduction has not been on the policy agenda for several decades due to beliefs that Japan practices egalitarian society - a society which favors social equality and no class segregation and had been achieving its economic growth without worsening income disparity. It was also believed that Japan's social security system, built after the 1960’s, has solved most social problems. The definition of “poor” is understood only as people who are starving and with no shelter, in other words, absolute poverty.

From the above discussions, my suggestion is for Japan to increase public awareness regarding the social issues of the country. This could be part of a “social inclusion” approach, to include the society at large, by updating them on the current social standing. This could open avenues and opportunities for the society, who among them could be the young professionals, individuals with social
interests, organizations and companies that are or about to look into practicing Corporate Social Responsibility, and others, to be able to come forward to together contribute various ideas and ways to combat the situations.

Programs in strengthening the family unit and enhancing family bonding could be considered to promote healthy relationships among family members. Topics such as balancing work and family life, gaining support from family members while developing a career, how to manage problems at home and at work, could be useful in increasing family cohesiveness.

The Japanese Trade Union Confederation could also work with companies and organizations, to tackle the issue of unemployment and retrenchments, and introduce a rewards system to companies or organizations such as subsidies for those who send employees for skills upgrading or re-training.

### 4. Experience and Knowledge Gained
The 11-day JENESYS East Asia Future Leaders Program, has indeed left a valuable and memorable experience and exposure for me personally and as a delegate representing Singapore. Participation in this program, has provided me with a deeper understanding on the different types of poverty that exist in different countries, and how it is tackled respectively. The networking and exchanges with the delegates from the other 15 countries, including Japan, was tremendously wonderful. Being my first visit to Japan, I must say that I think Japan is a beautiful country with beautiful people. I gained a great understanding of the Japanese culture and got to taste its different cuisines. The experience in Umaji-mura has left me with a deep impression of the high sense of commitment, dedication and determination that exists in that village, which I can share with people from all walks of life, from my organization, to friends, relatives, beneficiaries, partners and all. It has definitely made me a more motivated person to keep the society moving forward positively. Kudos to the Japan Foundation for their wonderful work in organizing this excellent program!

### 5. Follow-up and Action Plan
I would like to propose the JENESYS Programme to travel out of Japan to gain insights from other countries that could be referred as useful guidance in addressing social issues in Japan.

Secondly, I propose Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) and Non-Profit Organizations (NPOs) from East Asia and Oceania to gather and discuss social issues existing in each country from time to time and exchange views and ways of overcoming them.

On a long-term basis, I am planning to include a field trip component in my training courses which I am currently developing or have developed for the Community and Social Services sector in Singapore, to name a few. This would allow course participants who are mainly from the community and social services sector to gain insights and learn what others are doing. The field trip could be to any social movement, organization, NPO, NGO or other related association in countries such as Malaysia, Brunei, Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam and other East Asian countries.
**Chawanad LUANSANG** (Thailand)
Founder/Director, Openspace Community Architects

Mr. Luansang received his Bachelor of Architecture from Silpakorn University in 2000. In 2001, he started to work with Community Architect for Shelter and Environment, and since then, he has developed many kinds of community improvement plans to propose the community coexistence with environment and the solution to solve community conflicts. In 2007, he founded Openscape Community Architects, pursuing his community-based activities. Also as a visiting lecturer at the schools of architecture, he tries to inspire students to see more options of work and to think of helping our society in solving social problems together.

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1 Mr. Makoto Yuasa [NPO:Moyai] is giving us a lecture
2-3 Children’s Center in Kotobuki-cho, Yokohama
4 Mr. Takazawa, works with the homeless in Kotobuki

We are all volunteering. Some help serving hot dishes, some do the dish-washing and some collect the dishes after eating, as part of a program for the homeless in Kotobuki every Friday.

A cheap 5 square-meter house for 2,000 yen per night for the workers and the homeless who still get some support from the government in Kotobuki
5 Talking to some homeless elderly
The Sunday market atmosphere in Kochi, Shikoku Island is full of products from the near villages. Most of the products are food and plants.

Visiting Umaji Village; eating, relaxing, dipping in the hot spring and learning the community developing methods are like a dream come true.
On 8th December, I was standing in Suvanabhum Airport and could obviously feel that the whole atmosphere was like someone had just recovered from his illness. The airport looked and sounded so lonely and lifeless. On the other hand, my heart was beating excitingly, having a great opportunity to come to Japan to participate in a workshop where the topic is about Solving Poverty Problems. I was actually quite surprised by the topic and questioned myself how the poverty in Japan would look. Generally, most people would think that Japan is always a good example of what we call “Development”, especially for our country, the country that has been heavily following the “Development” example.

Even though the workshop was not long enough for me to tell what Japan is like in very deep details, still it was very interesting for me to see what the other side of the development is like. Also, I believed that the little things that I would see would reflect different sides of the development which would hopefully make us step back a little bit and reconsider the whole direction of what “Development” really is.

I have spent 8 years in working with poor communities both in urban and rural areas around Thailand and in some other countries as a community architect. The work mainly focuses on working with communities in solving settlement problems and it always interestingly teaches and shows me that the meaning of settlement is more than the things that we can physically touch and see. So, these things are what we always try to create, through working with communities in solving housing problems. I found that the design working process is an area where the poor, not poor and organizations can come, share their thoughts, experiences, problems, and finally be able to look at possibilities and start to slowly build a way out of the problem together. Also, learning from each other’s mistakes and successes can create new relationships among people and things, which also leads to being able to deal with small problems and then with bigger ones after learning to work together. Learning from one community and extending the results to others who share similar problems can also create a network between people and of some new and interesting issues. The community area where people can come and share will be limitless and the network will help to make a clearer or more possible direction in solving housing problems directly from the grassroots, to make a “true” policy. For example, between 2004 and 2007, rehabilitation of the local fisher folk communities, which were facing a tsunami disaster project, was done by working with small communities, while also making a network among them. This process helped to propose a long term planning policy that truly comes from real communities. For example, proposing that the land belongs to the communities. These things have gradually come from working with small groups of community members and after creating an open area where everyone is welcome to participate in sharing ideas, listening to others or working together. I can say that it is the heart of positive changes. Working with some of the poorest people in the country in different contexts awakened me slowly as started to question myself about what being poor really means and how it occurs. Unless they are lazy, doing drugs or addicted to gambling, I have surprisingly found that many poor people have been working very hard and that sometimes they even get poorer.

I personally think that the poverty problem is a phenomenon of developmental mistakes. Fixing the problems without considering what the real causes are, can make fixing the problem become an even bigger problem. As an example, individual welfare depends on the decision of government officers. Also, the discontinuity of fixing problems or development will always obstruct the good intention or potentials of people who want to have a better life in their own society and environment. It can even make them feel lonelier when good relationships between people are not created, even when the social welfare is available.

Looking back at our past, the question is how people were able to live happily together in the past. Our land was rich, and everything mutually depended on each other. I think our past society used to have different scales of dependence but they were still related to each other. For example, relationships from the smallest scale like
family to family relatives, to something big enough to be a community. The community needed a religious place that helps people stick together as a community. Each community shared resources like, the forest, the river or the sea and the land. They passed on their knowledge of how to sustainably live together, to respect nature and the knowledge that is designed by culture and beliefs. These things were the true welfare for all living things, while they also created three levels of a sustainable kind of relationship, which are the relationships between human beings and society, nature and spirituality. (In terms of urbanization, it is quite a new task and we have to find out how to solve the problems and create community relationships through each problem-solving process.)

Looking again at what we have “developed” for the country, many problems followed the development. This clearly shows that the development process itself may be the problem. From what I could understand, one of causes of the problem has been that local or national policy has always been proposed without any local participation or notice, such as a lot of dam building projects, building industrial areas or announcing a new national park in very old communities where people have been living for generations. Often, it has led to destroying community potential and the knowledge of sustainable living within their own environment. Not only that, it has always destroyed our own environment and pushed the people who were able to live on their own and with the relationships they had, to invisible places. The community people have been forced to separate and move to work as low-cost laborers in the cities or industrial areas.

The second problem is that with the kind of educational system we have, there is a lack of learning from real situations. We don’t even learn to follow the truth of the world, country and the real potentials that we have. It is therefore no surprise that learners cannot deal with problems or create something creatively based on the potentials that are already here in our society. It turns into a cycle of the same ideas of the developmental kind. Once we learn something based on something that is not from our real nature, we will always lack spirituality or humanity and emphasize much more on the modern logic.

The third issue is Globalization, in which everything is linked. Even the financial crisis affects everything in the world to the very smallest part. This also includes the adoption of everything like media without consideration, which has then led to an extremely materialistic habit instead of sharing the inside happiness like we used to.

The idea and attempt of my friends’ in the group and mine, is to design a process as a tool to build back our community. Also, we hope to turn problems into opportunities where community people and organizations can come and find solutions together and gradually learn to understand things together, as well. Our goal is not only for housing problems to be resolved, but also for relationships to be built strongly along the way. This relationship will be the true base to help us solve bigger problems together or to make things more creatively in the future, while also recognizing what the problems really are, why they happened, and what potentials they have. Then we can make tangible plans and finally realize them in the very small to much bigger levels.

The very important start of turning crisis into an opportunity is the year that Thailand was facing a huge financial problem in 1997. More than two million people lost their jobs and returned to their homes in other provinces. (During that time we still had a very strong family system which is an important base that helped us go through the crisis without any or with very little effect to the economy and society.) The NPL (non-profit loan) was more than 2.8 thousand billion baht. One new project during the crisis called SIF (Social Investment Fund) was created and implemented by borrowing 120 million US dollars from the World Bank to encourage community investment. The idea of having community investment is to use money as a tool, to help communities accomplish their ideas and dreams by working and finding solutions together about how they wanted to solve their own community problems. The condition was that the community people had to come and work together and donate their own materials and propose ideas on how they want to manage their community financial system. Otherwise, they would not be able to get the loan. During that time, a lot of people came out and started to talk more about community or society on different issues – not only the housing issue, but also infrastructure, career and ecological issues. The expectation was to let the community learn how to work on their own, to know how to survive while the relationship between people is also being developed. Now there are some interested NGOs taking part in this kind of project as well aiming to give help and advice while also working with the people.

Another interesting point that has been playing a very important roll is a community saving system created by the “community philosopher,” a person who has a lot of community knowledge and uses the knowledge to create this community saving system to cope with the financial problem. This system encourages communities to start saving, while also having a community loaning system which the community itself sets up a group of people who
will take care of the money and specifies together how much interest will be collected and spent on community welfare and funding. It is considered an interesting managing method as it clearly gathers people together, to meet and talk. Once they have a strong financial base, they are able to get more money from the government to manage their community problems while there community relationship is also developed. As they themselves know who really have a problem, who is poor or disabled, the money spent will be more useful and worth spending and based on generosity. I can say that once we have a problem, we can learn from it, but the true goal is to be able to fix the cause of the problem as well, which will also lead to the development community relationships.

This system really proves that it can help the communities cope with a financial crisis in a sustainable way and it is like a start that encourages us to think about a continuous way to work with the communities. Also, there has been more participation from the government sector and the communities. From that, a new community sector has emerged, which can hopefully be another option for Thai politics at this moment.

During the first few days we were introduced to the problems of Japanese society, especially in urban societies through lectures from some specialists and NPO organizations which have been working with homeless, jobless people and with some who have to face domestic violence. What I learned and thought about how I could use that in working with communities in Thailand is that I could see that every organization has research data that shows what the causes of the problems really are. The data is represented by showing statistics and using graphs or graphics. One of the organizations that could show their data about homeless people is the Kotobuki Supporters Exchange Association, an organization that works with homeless people in Kotobuki in Yokohama.

According to the data from Takasawa, who works there, there are about 14,707 homeless people in the three big cities, Tokyo, Osaka, and Nagoya. (There is also new data saying that there may be 100,000 jobless people in March, 2009) 63.9% of the homeless are people between the ages of 50 and 65, and 96% are men. The homeless people were formerly people who moved into the cities to work as laborers in the industrial and construction sectors between 1960 and 1970, the time when Japan was developing and expanding its city and industrial areas. Unfortunately, during the year 1990, the financial crisis caused a big change to the industrial sector, which started to move to the third world. This is the major cause of people loosing jobs during that time. Nevertheless, after the

world crisis again in 2000, more Japanese people became homeless and 43.2% used to be middle class people.

From the data, if we look at the numbers of homeless people as an indicator of the Japanese societal system, the question is, what does this data tell us. This homeless problem is not because these people were lazy or did not work. However, it comes from the societal system.

There are four things that I could point out; One is the system of lifetime employment where social welfare is available which also includes accommodation. When these people lose their job, they also lose their house and everything provided by the company. That means they become homeless. Secondly, the government only provides welfare for people who are 65 or older. This is why there are a lot of homeless people between age of 50 and 65. They are too old to work but still cannot get any special help from the government. The third is the Japanese mindset about men having to lead the family. When they lose their job, they feel ashamed that they cannot take care of the family. They cannot even go back to their hometown to their families, unless they have become successful or have a job. That is why they choose to be homeless. The fourth is that when renting a house in Japan, one needs a person to up collateral security and earnest money. This is hard for the homeless people to find. Takasawa concluded that the homeless problem is the problem of the societal system. What he has been trying to do is to encourage them to do activities together such as at special occasions, in order to make them start talking, sharing ideas, helping each other and hopefully to become able negotiate with the government and able to speak in detail as to what kind of help they really need.

I found that the jobless problem in a rigid society can cause a lot of problems, for example, divorce, domestic violence, and problems faced by young people who have a lot of stress from having to compete with so many people.

We also got to talk to an NPO named Moyai, an independent life support center in Tokyo. Makoto, the establisher who has been working since 1990 with the jobless, homeless and women who have to face domestic violence, and young people, stated that the reason for establishing the NPO was that the government could not deal with these people's problems, which have been increasing everyday. The NPO group was established during the financial crisis in 1990. This group created an open space for these people to come and share their thoughts and problems and to do activities together so that they can get advice and learn to exchange. The organization also provides food and medicine. The people who share the same problem can come and join the group,
such as the jobless people who come on Fridays. They will make coffee together and start talking. There is a tea party on Thursdays for women who share domestic violence problems. Kaori, the woman who has been working with the women's group said that she was one of the violent victims before. She found the Moyai group, they gave her advice and a lot of help until she could get away from the house. She now works with the group. She said that every year, there are approximately 110 women who die from domestic violence. Unfortunately, not very many people believe this and so they show this data. Her job is to go out and visit people who have this problem and try to encourage them to come and do activities such as cooking, going for a walk, taking pictures or having a tea party with others and to able to speak out about problems that they have. When the problems have been spoken out and finalized, the group will link with the government and ask for help.

From having a chance to discuss with the two groups that have been working with homeless and jobless people, I found that development in the past 40 years has produced a lot of stress and competition in order to gain economic success, more than focusing on the happiness of living with others. It also attracts a lot of young people to move into big cities from their hometown and that causes the lack of continuity in community knowledge. There is no one to pass the knowledge on to. Or even anyone to take care of their families. That is why the local communities get weaker. How can we build a community in the big cities among such problems and economic crisis? This is a challenge for people who work for the government as we can clearly see that the societal system that we have does not have enough potential to cope with upcoming problems. Japan may need a new idea. I think that we are still lucky to be able to be trail behind people as we watch them creatively try to find a way out of the crisis. We were also lucky to visit some ancient remains and old and simple traditions. I think these things still provide great opportunities among the crisis.

It has been almost two years since I read the book called "A Huge Experience of a Tiny Village," which was translated by Mutita Panich. I have always had a dream of visiting this village and luckily my dream came true. By the time we arrived the village, it was already dark. There was a welcome party organized by the village headman named Takashi. He was very friendly to us. After dinner he made us a drink that had Shochu mixed with yuzu vinegar. "Japan is not only Tokyo" he said and laughed out loud. He said "Japan actually has quite a variety but everything is set from the center. Therefore, communities and villages are not important anymore. The development has only been focused on building modern cities. Our village has set our four development goals, which are:

1. Development of a village where healthy a baby’s cry can be heard
2. Development of a village where high-spirited children play and go to school happily
3. Development of a village where residents work actively
4. Development of a village where the elderly cheerfully talk and laugh

As we can see the goals are to make everybody in the village happy to live together and to make the village a pleasant place. How do they do it with only 1,150 people?

The important factor is to create jobs in the village and know how to use the resources they already have, while also pushing people's participation into the community and encouraging them to share ideas, and to help each other in a joyful way. When the community started making products from the yuzu fruit, they had to do experiments and made a lot of mistakes but they never gave up. Their products are now very famous and are of good organic quality. They helped to strengthen the village itself. By traveling around and selling their products in different places, they have now made a direct selling system and attract people to come to visit their village. There is a small local hotel which still has presence and is comfortable. The hot springs they have is another selling point. We also got a chance to have a look at the pine wood production as the village has 96% of forest areas which means that they have a lot trees and produce some modern products like briefcases. Another production we had a chance to look at is the Yuzu factory which is a high technology factory. Apart from being a nice place to visit, it is also a learning center about community development where people from up to 400 groups from all over the world come to visit each year.

Another outstanding point of this village the presentation of their happy village through design prints and public relations. They work with some artists and advertising companies in advertising the village and sending news to their customers three times a year. The design is changed every time. Everything published is approved by all of the village members. They now have 350,000 customers around Japan and earn 3.3 billion yen each year, from selling their products.

When there are jobs in the village, it clearly shows that people from outside the village want to come to the village to work. This can fix the jobless problem in the community while also providing jobs for others around it.
If we consider this kind of development carefully, we can see that it is sustainable development while also helping the people to live together without competition. It is all based on their own resources. The number of people moving into the cities will be decreased. Moreover, the village attracts young people to come back to their hometown after finishing their studies. When we asked about the major factors that help the village to be successful, Takashi told us: “We have done something that no one has ever done before. We kept on doing it until we were successful. We never ever gave up.” His message was so strong that it reminded me of some bits from the book that talked about having to make mistakes, learning from them, never ever stopping what you’re doing and having participation from the community. That way there will be support from outside. I really learned that “Japan is not Tokyo.” There is always a way out of the crisis. Even this small village in the valley has proven that their community has enough potential to learn and fix their own problems in a very integrated and sustainable way. However, another factor that helps this village remain is the support from the city people, who trust in the good intentions. From this, it clearly shows that cities and villages still have to depend on each other.

Poverty can be caused from different reasons and affect different things. One of the very important affects is the problem of not having enough food that human beings naturally have to eat every day, in order to survive and have enough energy to make a living. We had an opportunity to learn from the Second Harvest organization, which was established by Charles E. McJilton. He is American and spent time with some homeless people near the Sumida River for 15 months from 1997 to 1998, where he found the problems of the homeless. In 2000, he established the Food Bank. The idea is to collect food that is chosen to be thrown away but still edible, at a warehouse, make classifications and then send it to different wanted spots. This idea occurred in America during the year 1960. The data we got from him shows that everyday, one-third of edible food in Japan will be thrown away. That can amount to 330,000 tons per day. The reasons are that there are too many food products that have wrong instruction labels. The packaging is either destroyed, or the food is close to its expiry date. At the same time, the data from OECD [organization for economic cooperation and development] shows that there are about 19.5 million poor people and that 650,000 of them do not have enough food. 53% of them are single moms, 43% are the elderly and 4% are homeless. The rest are foreign laborers. The food news advertised in magazines and newspapers and people who want the food can contact the office then an inspector will be sent. Second Harvest office has only five or six key workers. The rest are volunteers, which I find very interesting as they can also learn the real societal problems as they do volunteer work. This can be a very good inspiration for them to continue working in this area in the future, because turning a crisis into an opportunity and turning the thrown away food into something edible and means a lot to the poor. Charles also said that if we wanted to throw away 1 ton of food, we would have to spend 100,000 yen. In 2005, Second Harvest could help save up to 17 million yen from not throwing the food, but donating it to people. Sending 175 million tons of food to people cost 105 million yen. This and the running costs come from donations. He also said that what he does is not helping the poor. He thinks that we are all the same but what the organization does is to find them a “tool,” which is the food that will help to give them time to survive and able to find their own potentials.

Almost every NPO organization that we met acts as a middle man who links the poor and government together. The way they survive is by getting support from the government or from donations. However, there are still some whose work is still doing something for others but they try to help them to survive on their own, first. There is one organization called Kamonohashi, which was established by Kunihiko in 2002. The goal is to help solve the child prostitution problem in Cambodia, which is caused by being poor. He thinks that providing jobs and educating them will help to solve the problem. It led to a research about finding a way to increase the people’s income. The research led to an idea of having a souvenir factory for tourists run by Cambodians, and training the community people to produce their own products. He creates a new system of funding the organization without getting any donations by using a new model called Social Enterprise. In 2007, Kunihiko and his partners opened an IT business development company, which was growing well in Japan during that time. The profit was spent on hiring workers both in Japan and for he factory in Cambodia and to subsidize the factory running costs. The donation that they get would be spent on some activities related to creating new jobs and educating people in Cambodia. Apart from getting donations from organizations, they also get assistance from people who are willing to help. The people who want to help can do so by applying to be a member. There are two types of members. One is a supporter member, who has to donate 1,000 yen per month. The other is a full member, who has to donate 3,000 or 5,000 yen per month. As of date, they already have 1,300
members, which are enough for covering all expenses in both Japan and Cambodia. Even though the factory in Cambodia does not have any profit yet, the profit from the company in Japan can still help to run it. Kunihiko also has a plan to open another IT factory in Cambodia in the future. So this is one example of a company that has the social enterprise model working to help fix society's problems. It is considered quite independent and is able to plan the direction of a continuous long-term organization. We also got to talk to a company photographer in Japan. She said that she could do the work that she loves in this company which is taking pictures while also participating in helping Cambodian children to have better quality of life. Her income is also more than she got from the old place. So being able to do the work that we love and make better changes for others at the same time will help to run an organization in a creative way.

Apart from learning from different organizations that have been trying to solve the poverty problem, another important thing was exchanging ideas with the friends that I met in the workshop both formally and informally during the trip, eating, talking on our way, walking or even in the Sen-to hot spring. These things really helped me understand more about how we work and what kind of work we were sharing, while also developing friendships between us and feeling that we are not alone. Hopefully, we created a network where we can do things together in the future.

What I plan to do in Thailand is to create a kind of activity or space where people who work or are interested in the housing, rehabilitation or preservation issues will be able to come and talk about what their contexts are like and exchange experiences and get a chance to see their projects in real places. I hope that we can learn from each other and have a very supportive network. I will also be able to share my experience with others in Japan this time as well.

Another challenging thing is to find a way to make our group able to survive and live on our own. The social enterprise model learned from the Kamonohashi project is a very good example. I will tell the people in my country about this example and discuss with them about how we can start maybe from using our skills and then perhaps developing them to create some other interesting techniques.

There were so many little things that I found interesting in Japan, such as the electric sensor that helps us save electricity, the transportation networking system for bicycles, pedestrians, bicycle parking lots, the idea of separating garbage and, different ways to save our energy. Everything is designed, for example, a toilet with the sink on top, watching people collecting garbage on their way back to work, the generosity and politeness of Japanese people. All these things really made me want to go back and look at my country and the way we live again. We can start by doing a small thing first like doing garbage separation and finding ways to save our energy. These small changes are the important basis that tells us that it is all possible to do.

Lastly, I think it would be great if the Japan Foundation could organize an activity like this for young Japanese people as it will open their minds into knowing more about what actually happens in their society, and to know the groups that work in this area. This could be a great inspiration for them to creatively start making changes for their society while also giving them advice and possibly the appropriate funding.

Poverty is such a big problem that we cannot solve or get rid of it on our own. We have to look at it in a very careful and sincere way so that we will be able to understand the truth of the problem and able to turn the crisis into an opportunity, and finally make the link between the small things. I think that a community is where a group of people share the same objective, communicate, learn together, work together and help each other. We must create a new limitless community among the crisis. We can use so many good things from this modern world and the humanized heart to solve our common poverty problem together. This activity has begun to awaken communities to grow up and to know that “We are all part of our community.”
How Can NGOs Address Poverty Issues?

Dang Huong GIANG (Vietnam)
Director, Action for the City

Ms. Giang received her Bachelor of Arts in English and Russian from Hanoi National University in 1995 and her Master of Arts in Sociology from Catholic University of America in 2002. After working at Youth Research Institute, Catholic Relief Service, and Asia American Lead, she founded a local NGO, Action for the City, dealing with urban environmental and quality of life, and she is currently working as executive director.

This report is written as a result of my participation in the JENESYS East Asia Future Leaders Program, “Overcoming Poverty through a Social Inclusion Approach”. I will first present a general background on poverty and social welfare in Vietnam, with a focus on my work and its relation to urban poverty. I then will discuss my observations of poverty issues in Japan and the role of civil society in overcoming poverty. Finally, I will share the key learnings that I have taken home and ideas for future activities.

Vietnam has been seen internationally as a successful case of poverty reduction. It is generally agreed among international donors that Vietnam will soon join the group of middle-income countries. Household survey data of the General Statistics Office (2006) confirms the continued reduction of poverty in Vietnam, with the fraction of households living below the poverty line at 16 percent, compared to 28.9 percent in 2002 and 58.1 percent in 1993. Most of the poor live in rural areas, and rural poverty continues to decline. By contrast, urban poverty appears to have increased slightly (World Bank, Vietnam Development Report 2008)

My work at Action for the City has focused on urban poverty, especially among poor migrants who work in the non-formal sector and lack access to social security. The social security system in Vietnam, which consists of health insurance and a pension fund, covers only state employees and workers in the formal sector. By nature of their employment in the non-formal sector, poor migrant workers are not covered by the social security system. The government of Vietnam is aware of its limitations in providing universal social insurance, and therefore creates special programs to support people in poverty. These special programs include health insurance cards for poor households, social insurance books that ensure old age pension for the poor and a monthly allowance for poor households. In order to access the special programs, poor people need to officially register their residence with local authorities. Since migrant workers move from the countryside to cities without a formal residence, they are often not eligible for special programs.

Within this context, Action for the City decides to work with migrants to bring their voice to the public. We are using creative tools such as films and photography to raise awareness about the situation of the poor migrant workers. We made a documentary film called “Who does Hanoi belong to?” in which we explored how migrants and non-migrants view their ownership of the city. The film reveals that migrant workers felt excluded from the city and voiceless about their needs and concerns. The film has been shown in communities throughout the city to stir a public discussion on how residents should treat migrants and how migrants can be included socially and economically in the city.

With a background of working on poverty issues, I was particularly interested in the JENESYS program. The program was designed in a way that allowed the participants to learn about poverty in Japan through the perspectives of different stakeholders such as poor people, civil society organizations, labor unions and academics. There is a consensus among the stakeholders that poverty exists in Japan, the situation of poverty is getting worse and civil society has not yet played an active role in fighting poverty. Traditionally, the government and business...
sectors of Japan have provided social safety for citizens. When Japan faced pressure from the financial crisis in the mid-1990s, the government decided to adopt policies that weaken the protection of workers' rights. This has directly contributed to atypical employment which itself created social and economic implications.

To address the issue of poverty, most Japanese non-government organizations (NGOs) are engaged in the provision of social services such as soup kitchens, shelter for homeless people, food banks, etc. However, their role is limited in regards to monitoring and advocating government policies and business employment practices which are part of the root causes for poverty. A large number of NGOs receive funding from the government to provide services to the poor. The reliance on government funding on one hand and the limited financial support from the community on the other make it difficult for NGOs to be an independent watchdog and an advocate of poverty issues.

When I look at the situation of poverty in Japan and the role of NGOs, what comes to mind first is the need to increase public education about poverty. Both for short term and long term benefit, Japanese NGOs can play a crucial role in raising public awareness on the poverty situation, its causes and possible actions that citizens can take individually and collectively to overcome poverty. This suggestion is based on my own experience of working on urban poverty in Vietnam. In my country, urban poverty is a new issue. The government, the donor community, NGOs and citizens have seen poverty as mainly a rural issue. There is little recognition that poverty has become more serious in urban areas. My organization, Action for the City, focuses on raising public awareness through public campaigns such as showing films about the situation of poor migrants, organizing exhibitions of photos and stories on urban poverty and initiating internship programs targeting the urban poor, with projects for students to take part in. These campaigns have led to some positive changes among citizens, but not yet among policy makers. Several volunteer groups have emerged out of the campaigns and have started their own initiatives such as offering after-school programs for children of migrant workers, donating used clothes for poor migrants, providing regular health check-ups to migrant families, etc. These campaigns have also made Action for the City more visible to the public, and as a result, we have developed a network with people in the media and academia who are committed to working on urban poverty.

I am introducing some examples of my work in Vietnam with the hope that NGOs in Japan can be inspired to lead public campaigns on poverty. I am aware that there are some similarities regarding the operating environment for NGOs such as a lack of public awareness on the role of NGOs and relatively limited autonomy from the government. My key learning from the JENESYS program is that the NGOs' role is irreplaceable, even in a society where government and businesses provide social security for citizens. The role of NGOs will ensure that the government and businesses are accountable and that the voices of citizens are heard and responded to.

During the JENESYS program I met friends from other countries who share similar interests in working on urban issues. We have brainstormed an idea of organizing a regional workshop where we will bring both experts and practitioners in fields such as housing for urban poor, legal services for urban poor, rural-urban migration, etc. These are pressing issues that face many South-East Asian countries. At the same time, many participants in the JENESYS program are working on these issues and therefore can contribute directly through their work experience.

The JENESYS experience has enabled me to understand Japan better and to develop a strong network among young professionals in the region. In concluding this report, I would like to thank the Japan Foundation and its staff for organizing such a wonderful program.
December 10, 2008

Dear friends at Japan Foundation,

We, the twenty-one people from 16 Asian & Oceania countries, who took part in the USJSCC program in December 2008 would like to thank the Japan Foundation for the wonderful experience we have had for the last 10 days.

We enjoyed this program a lot, both professionally and personally. We will leave Japan with new insights and fond memories of people we met and places we visited. We will go home with fresh appreciation and understanding of Japan and the countries which were represented.

Thank you,跨国, for having a wonderful celebration. We will remember your lively laughter. Thank you, Hyogo san for providing help at all moments. Thank you, Hyogo san, and Mekko san for your support.

Here's our thank you for your excellent guide. We will miss your "honesty style".

Until we meet again!

From the Filmmakers of Asia & Oceania.