

News

Established in 1974, JFPF is the world's first supra-partisan parliamentary group on population and development.

In an age when global solidarity is needed to address various challenges, JFPF is expected to play an increasingly important role as a parliamentary caucus with a long history and tradition of leading Japan's diplomacy in the international community.

In every issue of JFPF Newsletter, we will carry "News" on activities and initiatives related to population and development issues.

News:

○ *AFPPD General Assembly and Collaboration with National Committees on Population and Development*

○ *Results of Questionnaire Survey on Population-Related Topics*

[Editorial responsibility: JFPF secretariat]

AFPPD General Assembly and Collaboration with National Committees on Population and Development

After the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD) temporarily transferred its secretarial functions to the Asian Population and Development Association (APDA), which also serves as a secretariat of JFPF, AFPPD has carried out a wide variety of projects under AFPPD Chair Hon. Prof. Keizo Takemi (Executive Director of JFPF).

On 24 May, with the support of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), it hosted online its General Assembly for the first time since October 2017. Some 50 persons participated in the General Assembly, including parliamentarians and members of national committees on population and development (NCs) from 21 member Asia-Pacific countries.

Hon. Prof. Takemi first delivered an opening address, in which he reported that the meeting of the General Assembly comes in the wake of the AFPPD's achievements in convening the meetings of the Executive Committee last November and April and organizing thematic meetings on ageing and gender. Mr. Björn Andersson, Regional Director of the UNFPA Asia Pacific Regional Office (APRO), then congratulated the relaunch of AFPPD's activities. He said that parliamentarians are vitally important as pillars of activities for the Asia-Pacific region to fulfill the ICPD25 commitments, emphasizing that legislation and policies by parliamentarians must be evidence-based and expressing much hope for future collaboration.



Reports were made of the transfer of the secretariat from Bangkok to Tokyo, results of discussions by the Executive Committee, and other developments. Proposals on amendment to the AFPPD Constitution, a strategic plan for the next four years, and appointment of office bearers were brought before the General Assembly and were resolved. In addition, the ICPD follow-up conference planned in November this year was discussed and approved.

The participating countries welcomed the resurrection of AFPPD as a valuable network for sharing information and experiences. Reflecting their expectations, they made a series of recommendations for closely collaborating with their respective national committees in AFPPD's three pillars of "active ageing", "investing in youth", and "gender equality and women's empowerment". Looking towards its future activities, Hon. Takemi said that it is extremely important for AFPPD to respect the views of each country, and reconfirmed that its statements will require a unanimous agreement by its member states.



AFPPD Meeting on COVID-19 and Vaccines

Following on the AFPPD General Assembly, an online meeting on the topic of "COVID-19 and Vaccines" was organized on May 24 with parliamentarians from AFPPD member states of Japan, India, Thailand, and the Philippines. Representing Japan, Hon. Prof. Keizo Takemi (AFPPD Chair), who serves as the deputy director of the Novel Coronavirus Response Headquarters for Japan's ruling party, reported, "Even under disconcerting circumstances, Japan cannot impose a lockdown. But acceleration of the vaccination programme can work towards a solution. At the same time, international cooperation through COVAX is important, and we recently made a policy recommendation for promoting domestically-produced vaccines".

Japan Parliamentarians Federation for Population (JPFP)

Established 1 April, 1974

Chair: Hon. Yoko Kamikawa (7th Chair)

Membership: 85 (As of 23 June 2021)

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In addition, a parliamentarian from India, which had been devastated by the pandemic, reported on India's bitter experience in vaccine exports; a parliamentarian from Thailand, also a physician, reported that they had entered into a clinical trial for joint development of COVID-19 vaccine with companies and institutions; and a parliamentarian from the Philippines, also a physician, emphasized, "parliamentarians, as legislators, must promote vaccination by establishing a platform for cooperation in both fields of science and law". Countries shared detailed data on their respective countries' situations in an active two-hour discussion.

AFPPD Online Dialogue: Exploring Pathways in Ending Child Marriage

On 7 June, AFPPD and the Philippine Legislators' Committee on Population and Development (PLCPD) jointly organized the online "Parliamentarian Dialogue for Exploring Pathways in Ending Child Marriages". According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 12 million girls under the age of 18 marry every year, and laws prohibiting child marriage have been enacted in AFPPD member states of Indonesia, India, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Nepal, and Kazakhstan. There are similar moves in the Philippines. After a bill was passed in the Philippines' Senate, attention is now focused on what steps the House of Representatives will take.

The online dialogue was attended by close to 70 participants from the Philippines and other countries. Parliamentarians from Bangladesh, India and Indonesia as well as representatives of the UNFPA Country Office in the Philippines, UNFPA APRO, Plan International Asia-Pacific Regional Hub, and the Philippines' Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao Transition Authority gave presentations. Heated discussions continued for three hours before the meeting came to a close with a call to action for eradicating child marriage and a proposal for having a next round of the meeting.

Results of Questionnaire Survey on Population-Related Topics

APDA, which serves as a secretariat to JPFP, conducted a questionnaire survey with UNFPA APRO on the topics of interest to parliamentarians involved in population and development issues in Japan and other Asian countries. The number of effective responses was 147 from 16 countries (the breakdown is on P.4), of which 26 were responses from Japan (JPFP's member parliamentarians). We would like to sincerely thank the parliamentarians who cooperated in the survey.

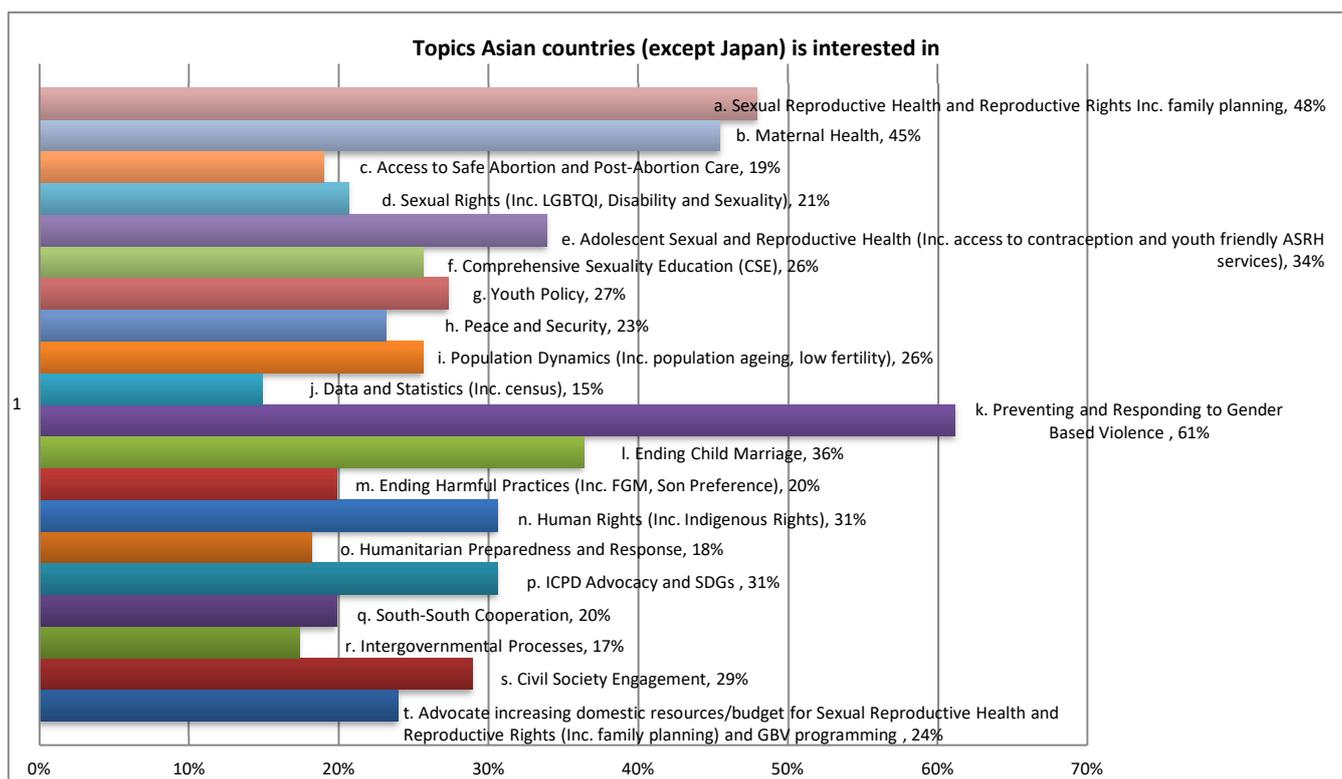
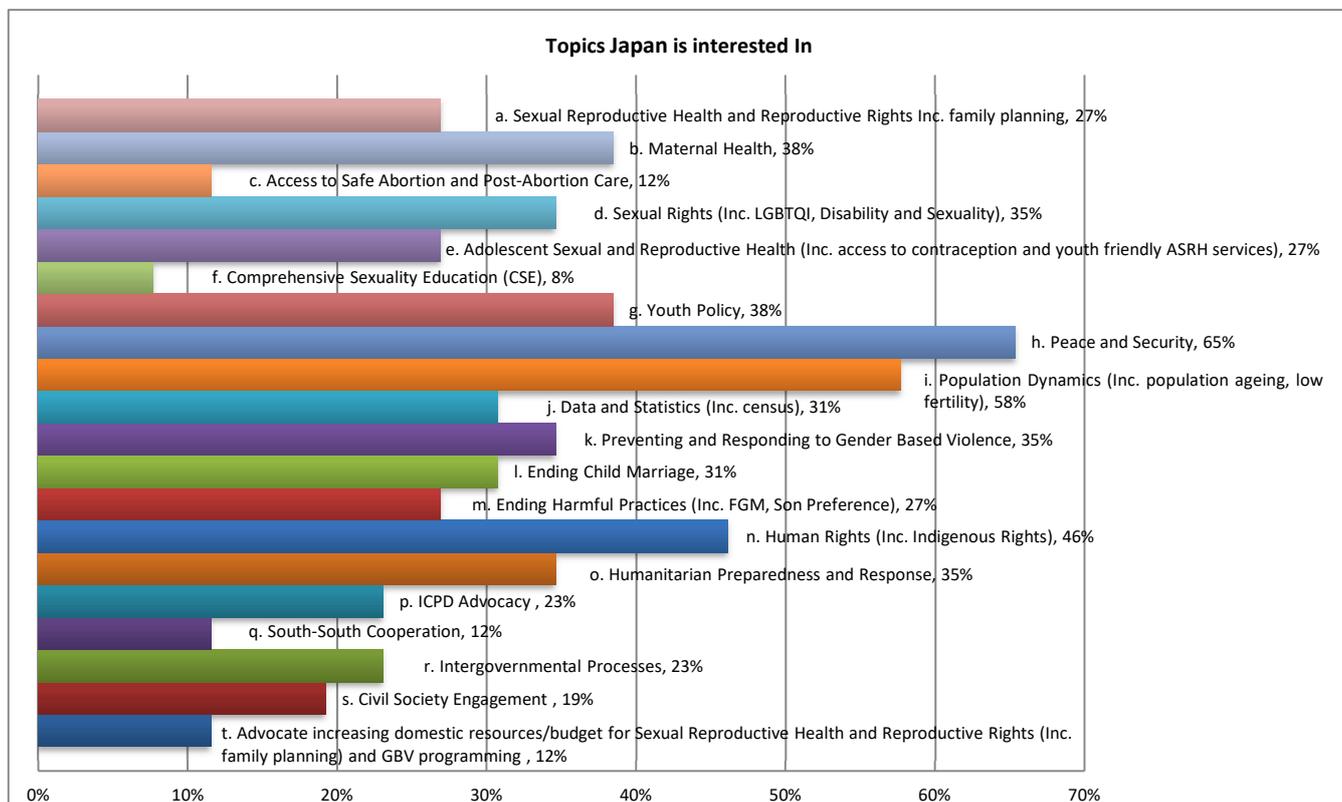
When a comparison is made of the results from JPFP's member parliamentarians and parliamentarians from other Asian countries (15 countries), it may be worth noting the following:

- The topics of highest interest among JPFP respondents were "peace and security" (65%), followed by "population dynamics (inc. population ageing, low fertility)" (58%), and "human rights" (46%).
- On the other hand, for other Asian countries, interest in "peace and security" ranked 13th out of 20 (23%), and interest in "population dynamics (inc. population ageing, low fertility)" ranked 10th (26%). The level of interest in these topics was low.
- For other Asian countries, the topic with the highest level of interest was "preventing and responding to gender-based violence" (61%). Interest in this topic among Sri Lankan parliamentarians, who made up the largest cohort for this survey, was particularly marked (all replied they were "interested" in this topic).
- The level of interest among JPFP respondents in "preventing and responding to gender-based violence" was 35%, which, in terms of ranking, tied "sexual rights (inc. LGBTQI)" and "humanitarian preparedness and response" at sixth place.
- The topic that JPFP respondents were least interested in was "comprehensive sexual education" (8%). For other Asian countries, it was "data and statistics (inc. census)" (15%).
- The topic with a high level of interest among respondents from both JPFP and other Asian countries was "maternal health," which ranked fourth (38%) and third (45%), respectively.

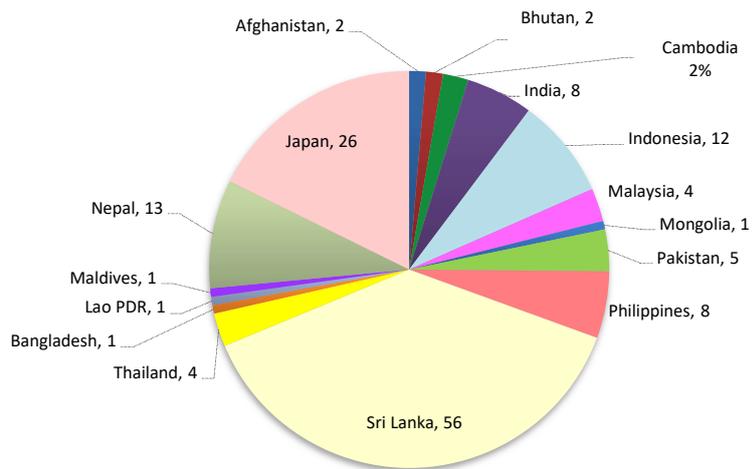
These results show that JPFP's member parliamentarians have interest in peace, security, and effects of demographics, which are issues of population in the broad sense. By conducting activities and providing information in related fields, JPFP can further stimulate, and respond to, interest of member parliamentarians. It was from this perspective that JPFP was established as the world's first supra-partisan parliamentary caucus on population and development in 1974. There was a strong awareness at that time that it was essential to address the issues of population in order to build peace and ensure security. It is also highly probable that these results reflect, rather than being topics of interest unique to JPFP's member

parliamentarians, a common perspective among Japanese parliamentarians in general who have interest in global issues, and by organizing study meetings and other opportunities for exchange on views on these topics, it may be possible to attract the interest of parliamentarians who are not members of JPPF.

For dialogue between parliamentarians in Japan and other Asian countries, sharing of best practices, experiences, and lessons learned in improving “maternal health” may lead to concrete policy measures and to strengthening collaboration. On the other hand, the level of interest in “advocacy to increase domestic resources/budget for sexual reproductive health and reproductive rights and gender-based violence” was low both in Japan and other Asian countries (ranking at 18th (12%) and 12th (24%), respectively). The challenge will be to identify and analyze the reasons for this lack of interest and to think of ways to connect parliamentarians’ interest to this field.



Respondents (by country)



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Supported by
The International Planned Parenthood
Federation (IPPF)