



News

Established in 1974, JPPF 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, JPPF 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 JPPF Newsletter, we will carry "JPPF Column" and "News" on activities and initiatives related to population and development issues.

News:

- *JPPF Organizes a Study Meeting on the Activities of UNFPA and IPPF*

[Editorial responsibility: JPPF secretariat]

JPPF Organizes a Study Meeting on the Activities of UNFPA and IPPF

On 6 July, the Japan Parliamentarians Federation for Population (JPPF) organized a Study Meeting on the activities of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF). Deeply involved in the establishment of both organizations, Japan used to be the world's largest contributor to these organizations related to population issues. While many countries around the world made headway in demographic transition through enduring efforts and social and economic development, the world's population issues have taken on a significantly altered aspect particularly in advanced countries where birth rates have decreased beyond expectations, raising concern about the issues of extremely low fertility and population ageing. Against this backdrop, the issue of population has lost much of its appealing power, leading to a steady decrease in Japan's contributions in the population field in recent years. In particular, it came as a shock when a proposal was made for a substantial reduction in the Japanese government's budget appropriations for population issues in last year's appropriations request. The feared reduction was averted owing to the last-ditch efforts of JPPF members and the support of the government, but the incident highlighted the need to clearly show the importance of addressing population issues in a changing world and their priority over other issues in other fields.

During the Study Meeting moderated by Hon. Hitoshi Kikawada, Secretary-General of JPPF, UNFPA and IPPF reported on the achievements made through Japan's support and their efforts in addressing challenges. The heads of the respective organizations sent video messages expressing appreciation to Japan's support. The Alliance on SDGs, Human Security, and Population (hereafter "Alliance")¹ submitted a petition to Hon. Yoko Kamikawa, Chair of JPPF, for securing Japan's contributions in the field of population for the fiscal year 2022.



[Summary of the Opening Address by Hon. Yoko Kamikawa, Chair of JPPF]

Even though we averted the catastrophic reduction in appropriations last year, we need to gain the understanding of the Japanese public and related government ministries and agencies to enable Japan to assist other countries maintain social stability and achieve the SDGs. Specifically, we must take into consideration changes in global population issues and clearly show the importance of Japan's assistance and its relevance in today's world. During this Study Meeting, we hope to have an expanded discussion on the actions that are needed for this purpose.

[Summary of Video Message to Japan by Dr. Natalia Kanem, Executive Director of UNFPA]

The COVID-19 pandemic that began last year has made efforts particularly in reproductive health (RH) and gender more important. While the disruption of the supply chain has made things increasingly more difficult, UNFPA is overcoming such difficulties and accelerating provision of essential services and supplies. I would like to express my respect to Japan's leadership particularly in the fields of universal health coverage (UHC) and human security. At the same time, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Japan for supporting UNFPA for many years and to AFPPD for your partnership. Japanese parliamentarians have been our trusted friends ever since the establishment of our organization in 1969, and we would like to continue in our efforts through further cooperation.



¹The alliance of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), JOICFP, the Asian Population and Development Association (APDA), and the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD)

Japan Parliamentarians Federation for Population (JPPF)

Established 1 April, 1974

Chair: Hon. Yoko Kamikawa (7th Chair)

Membership: 85 (As of 26 July 2021)


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[Summary of Video Message to Japan by Dr. Alvaro Bermejo, Director-General of IPPF]

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Japan’s cooperation, and would like to ask for your continued support. The relationship of cooperation between Japan and IPPF spans 51 years, and Japan’s assistance has helped many women. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused further damage in developing countries with vulnerable health systems. Under the new structure created from organizational reform at IPPF, we have been able to effectively provide services and minimize the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.



[Summary of Report by Ms. Mariko Sato, Director of UNFPA Tokyo Office]

- UNFPA strengthened its support to counterpart health ministries in order to ensure safe pregnancy and delivery of pregnant women with COVID-19.
- UNFPA strengthened its response to the issues of gender-based violence (GBV) and child marriages that increased sharply during the COVID-19 pandemic, maintaining or expanding preventive measures for GBV in 91% of the countries and maintaining or expanding family planning services, which had been suspended, in 74% of the countries.
- UNFPA carried out humanitarian assistance programmes in more than 50 countries, including in Syria and Yemen where there are refugees and other displaced persons, many of whom are women and children.
- Using the fiscal 2020 supplementary budget of the Japanese government, UNFPA responded to the RH needs in 18 countries under emergency humanitarian crises and promoted “Thank you Japan” campaign in and outside Japan to promote Japan’s presence.
- At present, Japan ranks 8th in terms of general core contributions to UNFPA, but higher ranked countries such as Sweden, Norway, and other Nordic countries still have a greater say. To keep up Japan’s presence, we hope that the Japanese government will maintain their contributions.

[Summary of Report by Ms. Tomoko Fukuda, Regional Director of East, South East Asia and Oceania Region of IPPF]

- Up to now, we have not been effective in being able to explain the relation between the global, macroscopic issue of population on one hand and personal issues facing individual women on the other. Moreover, the concept of “sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)” is expressed in a long katakana word in Japanese, and many people may have lost interest in population issues.
- Ensuring women’s safety in pregnancy and delivery can substantially improve the world by protecting women’s health, contributing to social and economic stability, safeguarding children’s health, and giving them more opportunities for education. We need to make the effort to widely disseminate this message.
- IPPF carries out its activities through 118 member associations and 15 partners working mainly with local NGOs in 142 countries. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, we used digital services, telephone, and chat to minimize the rate of uncompleted project to 13% down.
- As for organizational governance, IPPF’s organizational activities have been streamlined and improved through organizational reform and implementation of a safeguarding network.

[Briefing on the Outlines of a Petition, by Dr. Osamu Kusumoto, Executive Director and Secretary General of APDA]

- Society consists of population, and because population issues are related to every aspect of society, it is often difficult to understand where the focus is. The significance of addressing the population issues is to promote human welfare and reduce unhappiness. The core agreement of the ICPD in Cairo was to prevent unwanted pregnancies and improve people’s welfare through realizing universal access to reproductive health without making population issues a question about values. At present, the population issues are harder to understand partly because the question about values in relation to people’s rights has been pushed to the fore.
- According to WHO, more than 30% of births are resulting from unintended pregnancies. If we can prevent unintended pregnancies, we can sever the chain of misfortune that is passed onto future generations. Whereas efforts to address most other global issues are meant to respond to them after they happen, efforts to address population issues are preventive measures against unhappiness, and these efforts can be a fundamental approach to global issues. If Japan can deliver this message as a central effort in addressing population issues, we can make a significant contribution globally.



[Hon. Karen Makishima, Vice Chair of the Gender Issues Committee of JPPF]

We must also make the effort so that Japan's presence does not diminish any further. My question is related to IPPF's briefing about the assistance in Afghanistan. There are concerns that with the withdrawal of U.S. forces there, women will again be denied their rights. How is the situation?



[Hon. Ryuhei Kawada, Director of JPPF]

How widespread is the use of digital technology in providing services in Afghanistan?

[Ms. Tomoko Fukuda, Regional Director of East, South East Asia and Oceania Region of IPPF]

Peace and security are an issue in Afghanistan, but for all practical purposes, services are being provided. We hope to continue to engage in activities while being careful about security. Mobile phones are widely used in Afghanistan. We provided mobile phones to 150 midwives, which has facilitated communication and reporting. The Internet is also available at the clinics that serve as our base.



[Ms. Mariko Sato, Director of UNFPA Tokyo Office]

In Afghanistan, it is necessary to coexist with the Taliban and engage in lengthy negotiations with them to enable such coexistence. Empowerment of the communities and particularly women providing the services is important.

[Summary of the Closing Address by Hon. Yoko Kamikawa, Chair of JPPF]

The petition submitted by the Alliance has made clear the significance of addressing population issues. While we need to persuasively communicate its significance in the future, there are significant regional differences and compiling numbers for the world as a whole will not help people form a concrete image. To convince the related government ministries and agencies, it will be effective to systematically sort out and present individual cases that represent those numbers together with concrete evidence. The Maternal and Child Health Handbook, which originated in Japan, could also be an effective approach from the perspective of prevention. I would like to read the petition carefully for better understanding and share the contents of the report among my fellow Japanese parliamentarians.

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6 July, 2021
Alliance on SDGs, Human Security, and Population

Hon. Yoko Kamikawa, Chair
Japan Parliamentarians Federation for Population (JPPF)

Request for Securing Contributions in the Field of Population for Fiscal Year 2022

From the latter half of the 20th century, Japan's initiative in international cooperation has led to significant advances in addressing the world's population issues. Without stability in population, there can be no sustainable development or human security. Stability in population can be achieved solely through demographic transition, that is a transfer from a stage of high birth and mortality rates to a stage of high birth rate and low mortality rate and finally to a stage of low birth and mortality rates. Among non-Western countries, Japan was the first to achieve demographic transition, and it would not be an exaggeration to say that this gave a leg up to addressing the world's population issues. As a result, fertility declined in many countries. At the same time, progress in health care technology and improvement in nutrition have led to longer life expectancy around the world.

These achievements brought about by social and economic modernization and efforts made by humankind are something to be proud of. At the same time, however, population ageing has brought about an increase in social costs, and current population sizes cannot be maintained from extreme decline in fertility. These new challenges have now emerged before us. In addition, there are still, in Africa and other parts of the world, various social challenges caused by population increase as well as poverty that remains unresolved as major issues. The SDGs (2030 Agenda), which aim for sustainable societies while preserving human dignity, have targets to address above-mentioned challenges and issues. On the other hand, while solutions to population issues are effective means to achieving the SDGs, interest in the issues is waning.

Nevertheless, the importance of population issues is increasing as we try to tackle global issues. For example, in Africa (particularly among poorer populations), population continues to rapidly increase so that it is estimated that it will reach 2.5 billion by 2050. At the same time, Africa has the world's highest maternal mortality rate, neonatal and infant

mortality rate, HIV infection rate, and unmet needs in family planning. More than 90% of population increase will come from Africa and developing countries in other parts of the world. As a result, it is feared that this might lead to perpetuating the cycle of poverty, amplifying economic inequality, and threatening social stability.

The world's youth population is at an all-time high of 1.2 billion. If these youths cannot have access to family planning, there will be unprecedented levels of unintended pregnancies.

We need, moreover, to look at an increase in "migration". The population of those who require emergency relief due to conflicts or other reasons is 235 million (one in 33 people) around the world, an all-time high. In 2020, the number of people who had to flee to another country due to humanitarian crises doubled compared with 2000 to 34 million. Providing reproductive health services to such refugees and displaced persons in emergency situations is extremely important as a humanitarian measure.

It goes without saying that preventing unintended pregnancies is a basic approach to addressing population issues. In 1994, the countries of the world agreed to place population issues within the context of sustainable development at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). The central claim in the ICPD Programme of Action was "the provision of universal access to reproductive health services", with an emphasis on preventing unintended pregnancies. Despite consensus by the United Nations' Member States, these international commitments remain unfulfilled. According to some estimates, 31% to 35% of the world's births are the results of unintended pregnancies.

When a child is born from an unintended pregnancy, the child's parents become dispossessed of their perspective on the value of that child. As a result, developing countries have difficulty investing in the education of the child. It becomes one of the causes of child marriages, human trafficking, and child soldiers, all of which create social instability. At the same time, unintended births are a major cause of child abuse in Japan, creating a foundation for reproduction of poverty. In advanced and developing countries alike, unintended pregnancies and births are a cause of social problems in modern society and are undoubtedly related to many other issues.

Against this backdrop, investment in addressing population issues will have a wide-ranging impact. In particular, efforts in addressing population issues have a decisive advantage when compared with addressing issues in other fields. In other fields, efforts are made "after the fact" of a problem, whereas efforts to address population issues essentially happen "before the fact" of a problem – a fundamental approach to solving global issues. Moreover, efforts are also made after the fact to save the lives of mothers and children placed in dire conditions, protect their health, and create a society where women can maximize their potential. Such efforts also bring significant economic benefits and are indispensable in the development of a sustainable society.

Furthermore, it has been reported within the context of SDGs agreed to in the 2030 Agenda that investment in family planning and other efforts to address population issues has a cross-cutting, ripple effect on such global issues as COVID-19 and other global infections, natural disasters, climate change, conflicts, hunger, depletion of water resources, refugees and internally displaced persons, poverty, and economic inequality. Reportedly, return on such investment is exceptionally high and is long-lasting across generations.

At the G7 Ise-Shima Summit in 2016 and again at the G7 Cornwall Summit this year, the Japanese Government reaffirmed with other countries its commitment to promote universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights. The Japanese Government also recognizes that ensuring sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) is essential in achieving universal health coverage (UHC) under the COVID-19 pandemic, and has promised internationally to prioritize these services that have seriously been disrupted. We sincerely hope that the Japanese Government will earnestly execute these international pledges.

We hereby report the importance of tackling population issues, the achievements made in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic by leveraging the respective strengths of UNFPA and IPPF, and the improvements made based on recommendations from last year. For many years Japan has exercised its leadership in this field. To show such leadership in the international community, we request efforts be made in further strengthening contributions in the field of population.



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