

Online Luncheon Seminar

# Learning from Each Other in the Age of COVID-19

Human Mobility and the Future of Multicultural Society

Report

April, 2021

International Grant Program and the Special Subject  
“Migrants and Japanese Society”



THE TOYOTA FOUNDATION

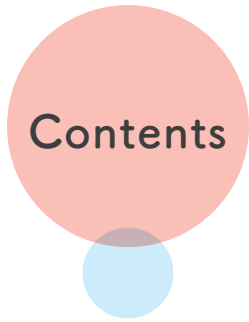


# Foreword

The Toyota Foundation held a series of online seminars, “Learning from Each Other in the Age of COVID-19: Human Mobility and the Future of Multicultural Society” from September 2020 to March 2021.

Today's Japanese society, with its declining birthrate, aging population, and declining workforce, is heavily dependent on the labor force of migrants from overseas. Due to the spread of new coronavirus, the environment of migrants and the state of our society have changed dramatically. Grantees of the Toyota Foundation's International Grant Program and the Special Subject Program “Migrants and Japanese Society”, discussed the impact of COVID-19 on their projects, as well as changes and issues related to international human mobility and shared their knowledge and experience, in line with the keywords of “Medical Care and Nursing Care” and “Information and Institution”.

In this report, we introduce the highlights of the 4 sessions and the closing discussion by commentators. The digest movies of the seminar, dubbed in English, are available on our YouTube channel.



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# Program



No./Date	Theme/ Speakers	Commentator
<p>No.1 (Live) Sep.30, 2020</p>	<p><b>Medical Care and Nursing Care (1)</b></p> <p><b>Ayako Kohno</b> Internationalization Promotion Office (IPO), Kyoto University School of Public Health</p> <p><b>Yuko Takeda</b> Department of Medical Education, Faculty of Medicine, Juntendo University</p>	<p><b>Shizuyo Yoshitomi</b> Professor, School of Global Governance and Collaboration, Nagoya University of Foreign Studies</p>
<p>No.2 (Live) Oct. 20, 2020</p>	<p><b>Medical Care and Nursing Care (2)</b></p> <p><b>Osamu Nimonjiya</b> AHP Networks</p> <p><b>Michiyo Yoneno-Reyes</b> Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia, The University of Tokyo *Affiliation is at the time of speaking</p>	
<p>No.3 (Live) Nov.18, 2020</p>	<p><b>Information and Institution (1)</b></p> <p><b>Yoshihiko Doi</b> Resource Center for Multicultural Community Tokai</p> <p><b>Toshihiro Menju</b> Japan Center for International Exchange</p>	<p><b>Midori Okabe</b> Professor, Department of International Legal Studies, Faculty of Law, Sophia University</p>
<p>No.4 (Live) Dec.8, 2020</p>	<p><b>Information and Institution (2)</b></p> <p><b>Shohei Sugita</b> KEIGLAD (Keio Institute for Global Law and Development)</p> <p><b>Reiko Harima</b> Mekong Migration Network</p>	
<p>No.5 (Broadcast) Mid-March, 2021</p>	<p><b>Review &amp; Wrap up</b></p> <p>Coordinator <b>Shigeto Sonoda</b> Professor of Sociology and Asian Studies, Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia, The University of Tokyo, selection committee chair for the International Grant Program</p> <p>Commentators <b>Shizuyo Yoshitomi</b>      <b>Midori Okabe</b></p>	

# Introduction of the Commentators



**Shizuyo Yoshitomi**

Professor, School of Global Governance and Collaboration, Nagoya University of Foreign Studies

She is General director of the nonprofit FACIL Multilanguage Center.

She received her MA from Kobe University (International Studies) and her PhD from Kyoto University (Human and Environmental Studies). After serving at several South American consulates in the Kansai region, she became involved in the establishment of the Kobe-based community radio station FM-YY in the aftermath of the 1995 Great Hanshin and Awaji Earthquake. This led to further involvement in activities supporting the foreign community in Japan, including the promotion of a multilingual environment and the development of youth programs.

She is author of “Multicultural Symbiotic Society and the Power of the Foreign Community”.



**Midori Okabe**

Professor, Department of International Legal Studies, Faculty of Law, Sophia University

She has received her Ph. D. (Advanced Social and International Studies) at the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, University of Tokyo. She was former visiting scholar to the Centre on Migration, Policy and Society, University of Oxford (2014), and to the Centre of International Studies, University of Cambridge, UK (2006) and Academic Programme Associate, Peace and Governance Programme, the United Nations University (2004-2006).

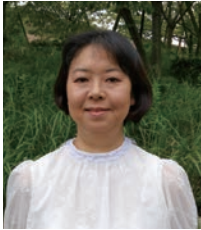
Her work focuses on the global governance of international migration, mainly with a view to European integration. Her current research interest rests on the international political (and economic) relations on migration management and the global order with regard to international migration.

Her major works include, Midori Okabe ed. “Hito no Kokusai Idou to EU,” Houritsu Bunka sha, 2016, and others.

## Introduction of the Speakers: Medical Care and Nursing Care

While the medical and nursing care field is particularly active in accepting foreign human resources, it is also an essential field in terms of the health and aging of foreign residents living in Japan. In the first half of our seminar series, we focused on this area, discussing examples of initiatives that are closely related to the field, as well as the challenges and prospects.

### Medical Care and Nursing Care (1)



**Ayako Kohno**

Internationalization Promotion Office (IPO), School of Public Health,  
Graduate School of Medicine, Kyoto University

A Program-specific Assistant Professor. She obtained her Ph.D. in Medicine from the Graduate School of Medicine, Kyoto University in 2020.

She was the first double-degree program student to be enrolled in a program between Kyoto University and the University of Malaya (Malaysia) during the period of 2014 to 2016, and she obtained a Master of Public Health from Kyoto University and a Master of Medical Science from the University of Malay in 2016. During this period, she was engaged in research of Japanese retirees living in Malaysia and their healthcare-seeking behavior at the local medical institutions.



**Yuko Takeda**

Department of Medical Education, Faculty of Medicine, Juntendo University

Yuko Takeda MD Ph.D. FACP MSc is a primary care physician trained in Boston and has been working in the area of medical education and global health. Besides her professorship at Juntendo University Graduate School of Medicine, she is a board member of Japan Primary Care Association and Japan Society of Medical Education and is appointed Chief Editor of Medical Education (Japan), which enables her to promote teaching SDH (social determinants of health) among medical schools in Japan.

She participates in an outreach program for people in homelessness and collaborates with an NGO helping children whose parents are from overseas.

### Medical Care and Nursing Care (2)



**Osamu Nimonjiya**

AHP Networks

He is an executive officer of AHP Networks which is a specified nonprofit corporation (NPO) in Japan. He had engaged in the Vietnamese nurse training support from 1993 to 2008, and 56 persons have acquired Japanese nursing license. In 2020, he made the Vietnamese version of a textbook “Gerontological Nursing and Care”, and it is utilized in local nursing junior colleges.



**Michiyo Yoneno-Reyes**

Professor, School of International Relations, University of Shizuoka

She has lived in the Philippines for 23 years and has conducted research on the music and society of the indigenous peoples in the northern Philippines, as well as on the transnational movements of the migrants to/from Japan and the Philippines in terms of their strategies within given social conditions (economy, immigration policy, cultural adaptation, language acquisition, etc.). She has co-edited and co-authored Foreign Nurses Working in Japan: Assessments of the EPA Program (in Japanese) (University of Tokyo Press, 2021), among others. She was an associate professor at the University of the Philippines and at the University of Tokyo before assuming her current position. She specializes in ethnomusicology and cultural anthropology.

### Commentator

**Shizuyo Yoshitomi**

Professor, School of Global Governance and Collaboration, Nagoya University of Foreign Studies

# Introduction of the Speakers: Information and Institution

The accurate transmission and reception of information are indispensable for the international movement of people in both sending and receiving countries, and the establishment of systems should be its vital foundation. Still, this is a field that has been facing many challenges. In the latter half of the seminar series, participants discussed this topic from various positions and perspectives.

## Information and Institution (1)



**Yoshihiko Doi** Director, Resource Center for Multicultural Community Tokai

He is Director of Resource Center for Multicultural Community Tokai, which he joined on its establishment in 2008 and he is leading the organization since a year later. Born in 1979, he majored Japanese language education in university and had been engaged in teaching Japanese. After his graduation, he also joined Japanese classes at his local community as a volunteer teacher.



**Toshihiro Menju** Managing director, the Japan Center for International Exchange

Joined JCIE in 1988 after working for the Hyōgo prefectural government for 10 years. Specializes in grassroots international exchange and immigration issues. Has worked as an adjunct lecturer at Keiō University and the Shizuoka University of Art and Culture. Currently a judging panel member for the International Exchange Commendation (Minister for Internal Affairs and Communications Award) and chairman of the Shinjuku Multicultural Community Building Committee. Works include “Genkai kokka: Jinkō genshō de Nihon ga semareru saishū sentaku (Nation of Constraints: The Choices Confronting Japan’s Shrinking Society)” (Asahi Shimbun Publications Inc.), and others.

## Information and Institution (2)



**Shohei Sugita** KEIGLAD (Keio Institute for Global Law and Development)

Sugita is an attorney at Century Law Office in Tokyo. Graduated from Keio University Law School in March 2011, he started his professional career in September 2011. He has more than a hundred clients and advises on a variety of issues on the international workforce such as immigration procedure, employment procedure, labor dispute resolution, and others. Sugita has been a lecturer at Hanoi University of Law from 2015 to 2017 and teaches at several institutions including Keio Institute for Global Law and Development (KEIGLAD). He also serves as a vice president of a nonprofit organization called Research Institute Of law Of Asia-Pacific Regions (RILAP).



**Reiko Harima** Regional Coordinator, Mekong Migration Network

Reiko is a founding member of the Mekong Migration Network (MMN) and presently manages the network as its regional coordinator. Her area of expertise is migration in the Mekong subregion. In 1999, following an internship with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) she joined the Asian Migrant Centre (AMC) as a research coordinator. Subsequently when the MMN was formally launched in 2003, Reiko was appointed as the Regional Coordinator, and has been coordinating the MMN joint activities in the areas of research, advocacy, capacity building and networking to date. Reiko Harima holds M. A. in Gender and Development from the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex.

## Commentator

**Midori Okabe**

Professor, Department of International Legal Studies, Faculty of Law, Sophia University



The speakers introduced the issues that are being recognized in the medical field and people's efforts to solve them. There was also a discussion on the challenges facing Japanese society as a whole thanks to the increasing number of people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

## Outline of the Projects

**Title: For Japanese medical care to be better for people from Islamic countries in Southeast Asia as well : Interactive communication strategy and social implementation through mixed-methods research**

**Project Representative : Ayako Kohno**

When foreign Muslim residents visit hospitals in Japan, they hope to receive medical care permitted by Islam (Halal). However, in reality, there are only a few medical institutions in Japan that provide services that are considered as halal. Thus, the Muslims in Japan often experience difficulties when visiting medical institutions in Japan. Therefore, they are “the medically disadvantaged” in Japan in the era of globalization. Especially, how to provide medical services to the Muslims living in Japan is still understudied. Therefore, we need to accumulate know-how about this topic. A few examples of halal medical services are; a female patient should be examined by a female physician, drugs or vaccines that contain porcine ingredients should not be used, and should not contain meat or alcohol in the hospital meals, and the Islamic religious leader shall be permitted to stay in patients' room for a prayer. By clarifying the challenges for them and providing concrete guidelines on what halal medical care should be in Japanese hospitals and encouraging such practice in implementation, it will be possible to increase hospitals that provide appropriate medical services to Muslim foreign residents in Japan. We will enlighten and disseminate information for healthcare professionals in Japan to enhance understanding on how to take care patients from Islamic countries.

### Activities under COVID-19:

- We conducted interview surveys by a method that let our interviewees choose between face-to-face or Zoom format.
- Participants spoke of the complexity and depth of the challenges facing Muslims living in Japan.

**Title: Implementation and dissemination of “plain Japanese” training for health care professionals and students through a workshop assisted by foreign residents in a community**

**Project Representative : Yuko Takeda**

Since we face a shortage of interpreters in Japan, we have been conducting “plain Japanese” workshops to help healthcare professionals and students communicate with foreign residents. “Plain Japanese” is not widely known in the medical field. To publicize “plain Japanese” to a wider audience in medicine, we provide workshop participants with copyright-free teaching materials and a manual to conduct a similar seminar at their own institutions. In this project, we aim to introduce, implement and disseminate “plain Japanese” at health care institutions and schools in at least ten prefectures with the highest number of foreign population, and to clinics/hospitals throughout Japan that provide care without co-payment for the underserved. In the workshop, we ask foreign residents in a community to participate as simulated patients, which enables healthcare professionals to listen to the foreign patients' experiences in person and enhance mutual understanding. We expect informal networks such as these may lower the barriers of access to health care in the community.

### Activities under COVID-19:

- Face-to-face dissemination workshops were moved online. The fact that they could be held without geographical restrictions was also advantageous.
- We were able to produce videos of “plain Japanese” in clinical settings as a collaborative project between Tokyo Metropolitan Government and universities.



## Perspectives on minorities offer suggestions to society as a whole



Kohno

Currently, there are about 130,000 Muslims from around 30 countries living in Japan. We believe it is necessary to promote understanding of the problems associated with differences in religious values as well as language and cultural norms. For example, Muslim female patients have to be examined by female doctors and nurses, but the percentage of female doctors in Japan is only 22%, which is much lower than in other countries. In the current situation, Muslim patients have difficulty looking up information, making requests, or identifying appropriate hospitals.

Not many people in Japanese society are interested in religion, for better or worse, so this kind of activity provides an opportunity to look at our society from a different perspective. It highlights some of the issues that Japan has always faced, such as our low percentage of female doctors. Regarding medical care, it is important for society as a whole to think about how we can live together with others who have diverse backgrounds rather than leaving it to medical professionals.



Yoshitomi

## Communication with diverse people is facilitated by creative ways of interacting



Takeda

“Plain Japanese” refers to Japanese that is readily understandable and tailored to communicate with someone who has difficulty communicating in regular Japanese. When speaking to a non-native speaker of Japanese, for example, simply avoiding honorific and humble language will greatly increase their understanding. Avoiding honorific “o” or “go” at the beginning of words can also be overlooked. “Kusuri” (medicine) and its honorific form “o-kusuri” can sound like completely different words. In our workshops, we practice replacing words and phrases with “plain Japanese” through role-playing with foreign residents. Participatory training not only helps medical professionals to learn, but also makes foreign nationals feel more familiar with medical institutions and medical staff.

“Plain Japanese” is also easier for children and the elderly to understand, and I think it can even facilitate communication outside the medical field. In addition to plain Japanese, a greater understanding of multiculturalism is also important to promote among medical professionals and society as a whole. It is vital that we remember to see things from the perspective of those involved, set an example by taking the time to involve as many people as possible, albeit gradually, and continue to steadily make friends rather than confronting them.



Yoshitomi

## From the audience



What considerations can be made if the healthcare worker is a Muslim?

**Kohno:** As the host, you may want to give consideration to things like food and a prayer space, but each individual may have different ideas, so you need to understand them through dialogue. I think we are living in an age where we need to communicate with each other in order to work without stress.



Are you working with the government or other public organizations to spread the use of “plain Japanese”?

**Takeda:** Our goal is to get “plain Japanese” included as a requirement in training for doctors and nurses to ensure that patients receive medical care safely and comfortably. I believe that if “plain Japanese” becomes widely used by medical professionals, it could be helpful not only for those who come from overseas but also for Japanese people, including the elderly, who may be hard-of-hearing or cognitively impaired.



The discussion focused mainly on people who come to Japan from Asian countries as caregivers, or those who came to Japan under the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) and have already returned to their own countries. There is a need to develop and utilize nursing and care personnel in Japanese society and throughout Asia, where the population is aging.

## Outline of the Projects

### Title: Transformation from Home Care to Elderly Care National Insurance

: Stabilization and Establishment of Cross-Cultural Cooperation for Foreign Employees at Japan's Nursing Homes

#### Project Representative : Osamu Nimonjiya

Approximately 3,100 people from Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam are living in Japan as caregivers through the Economic Partnership Agreement. In November 2017, “caregiver” was added as a career type to the Technical Training System, and as of April 2019, “Specific Skills” became a VISA category. However, in 2018, there were only 1,823 caregivers with practical training, of whom only a handful had not been to Japan. In the Philippines, the technical caregiving skills test had been conducted twice in the past. 631 Filipinos passed it however none came to Japan. Looking at the current situation from the perspective of Vietnam, which is the largest sending country for both workers and foreign students, it seems that although the purpose of working as a caregiver for the elderly in Japan is simple, its complicated and difficult system makes Vietnamese young people hesitant. However, we’ve created the best environment for this in which foreign employees are satisfied mentally and physically, and we believe it is pivotal to engage Japanese employees who support them. Is creating a comfortable working environment limited to just the workplace? We strive to remedy less-considered problems facing Japanese employees, like how they can commit to making the private lives of foreign employees who are separated from the workplace more manageable. On-site education is still important, but to not counter the finding of employment after relocation to Japan, mutual trust and cooperation from the start is imperative.

#### Activities under COVID-19:

- The hospitals and elderly care facilities where we had planned to hold surveys canceled due to COVID-19.
- Instead, we interviewed people who have been on childcare leave or retired temporarily, and former EPA care workers who have returned to Vietnam, about their experiences.

### Title: Entrepreneurship, Advocacy, and Research to Combat Aging and Migration in Asia

- Interaction of Ex-EPA Nurses/ Careworkers from the Philippines, Indonesia and Vietnam

#### Project Representative : Michiyo Yoneno-Reyes

Since 2008, based on the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA), more than 5,000 foreign nurses and careworkers from Indonesia, Philippines and Vietnam have entered Japan, and nearly half of them have already returned home. They have learned the Japanese language as well as Japanese geriatric nursing and caregiving skills. They have the potential to become main agents who create solutions of the problems of aging Japan and their home countries are beginning to experience commonly. This project supports the ex-EPA nurses and careworkers to innovatively develop non-profit activities, businesses and/or policy research. Returnees of the three countries will gather to introduce each other their respective unique activities; for example, a) well-minded manpower recruitment agency as a social business; b) establishment of the “Welfare-Caregiver-Nurse” as a new profession for returnee nurses who have learned person-centered-care in care work; c) health promotion through rehabilitation, and d) possible adaption, with adjustments, of Japanese long-term care insurance system, and so on. Government officials of these three countries will also be enjoined for sharing of the perspectives of the returnees. Sending countries may suffer from brain-drain of health workers, but the project supports the creation of opportunities for the returnees as uniquely skilled professionals.

#### Activities under COVID-19:

- Online study sessions for some returnees preparing for the National Examination for Nurses in Japan were conducted. The online sessions enable participants from different parts of the Philippines to join, including those who have small children.
- Because most of all of the participants in this project are nurses in their home countries, they have been extremely busy in their respective communities. It is not realistic that we conduct our own activities for the project for the time being.

## Creating a place for foreign caregivers amid a shortage of nursing care workers



Nimonjiya

According to an announcement by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare in September 2019, approximately 34,000 foreigners are working in the nursing and care sector in Japan. With a significant shortage of nursing care personnel expected by 2025, it is important to create a proper place within the system for foreign nursing care workers. A Filipino caregiver who has worked here for 10 years said, "I am able to continue because it is fun." In places where the turnover rate of foreign workers is low, the turnover rate of Japanese workers is also low. The key is how to manage workplaces so that they can continue.

I believe that the challenges faced by people with a foreign background working in the field of nursing care will reveal opportunities to improve actual problems in our society. We also need to realize that foreigners who live in Japan for a long time will receive care too, so it would be good if we can increase the number of sites where foreign caregivers are visible and active.



Yoshitomi

## Support and networking as a valuable human resource for all of Asia



Yoneno-Reyes

Health workers who come to Japan under the EPA take the National Examinations for Nurses/Certified Careworkers while working at a facility so that they can be employed as a registered nurse or certified care worker in Japan after passing the exam. Some say that the system has failed because of its low passing rate and low retention rate. I disagree. After returning to their home countries, they can become valuable human resources as Asia as a whole experiences aging. I believe it is necessary to track the lives of returnees and also to continue supporting those who passed the examination throughout their entire careers, in terms of Japanese language education and child-rearing.

I am reminded that we can only build a truly diverse society if we ourselves aim for a society where people can live comfortably and with human rights in mind.



Yoshitomi

## From the audience



**What are the challenges of including foreigners in comprehensive community care?**

**Nimonjiya:** Comprehensive community care is part of community planning. In order to live alongside foreigners as fellow residents, we need to reevaluate our relationships with other Japanese.



**What support can the private sector provide foreigners after EPA success?**

**Yoneno-Reyes:** There will never be an end in rendering support for their Japanese language learning. Many licensed health workers are pressured in balancing work and childcare in a foreign country. So, it is also important to create an educational environment where foreigners can send their children to school with peace of mind.



The discussion focused on how to develop appropriate policies and systems based on the actual organizations that receive or send foreign nationals to live and work in Japan.

## Outline of the Projects

**Title: A Strengthening Project of a Multilingual Consultation Service System Through Public-Private Partnerships-Towards Reaching Sustainable Management of (Japan's) Newly Formed Multi-Cultural General Information Consultation System “One-Stop Centers”**

**Project Representative : Yoshihiko Doi**

For foreign residents' to safely reside in Japan, connecting them with the necessary public services and information is of vital importance. To do this, information and consultation services have been provided in multiple languages and regions. However, in many cases they are not disseminated in a way that fits the foreign resident population residing in there due to a mismatch in available languages, consultation method, training of those involved, or lack of collaboration between the specialized institutions and support organizations. This can cause issues for foreign residents in need of this support. While the current dissemination issues remain, special funding for local governments to initiate a “multi-cultural acceptance and symbiotic living situation one-stop consultation center” began in 2019. Yet, this does not fully utilize already locally available support when considering the method of organization, thus causing these new centers to likely be ineffective and unsustainable for reaching their objectives. This study aims to investigate the current situation and issues by collaborating with experienced organizations, propose viable solutions to better assist foreign residents in becoming independent while protecting their rights, and devise ways to better prepare those involved in this support system as a model for creating a multicultural community.

### Activities under COVID-19:

- We have conducted and analyzed surveys to understand the current status of the consultation services for foreigners, not focusing specifically on COVID-19.

**Title: Guarantee of Adequate Information Provision in Transnational Migration -Toward a Realization of a Fair and Robust Migration**

**Project Representative : Toshihiro Menju**

Labor migration in Asia has become large-scaled by the development of institutional framework by both the sending and receiving country governments and the accompanying expansion of recruitment and job placement business across borders. However, migrants can only obtain individualized and fragmented information from recruiting agencies and acquaintances. The extreme asymmetry of information in transnational labor movement has led many migrating workers to experience a significant deviation from decent work such as illegal recruitment and employment, violation of labor rights, skill mismatches, and exclusion from social protection. This project aims to develop a collaborative action plan to design and implement a social infrastructure to guarantee provision of fair and adequate information concerning migration that eliminates various disparities in access to and transaction of information throughout the process of transnational migration. The project will bring together organizations and experts involved in migration issues in Japan and Korea, including the migrant community in the receiving country and former migrant workers returned to the sending country.

### Activities under COVID-19:

- Although no activity was possible in the first half of 2020, online meetings have been held since fall by members from four countries.
- Preparations are underway for a webinar on the theme of “Information provision and access during the coronavirus pandemic”.

## Creating a multilingual consultation service for foreigners



Doi

As part of efforts to strengthen our multilingual consultation service, we conducted a questionnaire survey of those in charge of the consultation service, and those who actually receive consultations or carry out interpreting. The results are still being analyzed, but it is becoming apparent that there are many people in non-regular employment, and many people who did not have the opportunity to receive training last year. In terms of understanding the needs of foreign residents, I think it is important to explore problems that are not brought for consultation.

I think the government needs to go one step further in establishing a policy of support, taking into account issues such as employment conditions and training opportunities. While promoting multilingual support, I think it is also important to improve the environment for Japanese language education for foreign residents.



Okabe

## Aiming to create a system that overcomes the intentional information gap



Menju

We have focused on the information gap that foreign workers fall into before coming to Japan. Some intermediaries intentionally provide false information, and we would like to try and implement initiatives such as information platforms and a rating system that can eliminate such malicious operators.

It's easy to imagine the vicious circle of economic hardship faced by intermediaries, so I think one solution would be to offer them incentives making it more profitable for them to become clean.



Okabe

## From the audience



**What are the challenges and prospects for foreigners living in Japan during the coronavirus pandemic?**

**Menju:** I think we need to take a very close look at ways of ensuring foreign nationals are not left behind in society even during the pandemic, such as incorporating Japanese language education into vocational training.

**Doi:** In such a situation, the top priority should be to protect the lives of all people regardless of nationality. Nevertheless, I feel something needs to be done about the situation where, due to constraints under Japanese immigration law, human rights are restricted and status of residence becomes an issue.

**Okabe:** It is a problem when people respond in a discriminatory way, but there are others who recognize and appreciate the existence of the foreigners who are responsible for essential work. Institutionalization has been proceeding slowly in response to changes in Japanese society, but it needs to move forward as quickly as possible. It is also necessary to clarify the existence of those in a vulnerable position in a way that does not instill a sense of unfairness among the public that special consideration is being given only to foreigners.



Discussions with a broad perspective of time and place were held on the history and prospects of immigration in Japan, formerly a sending country, as well as the overview of Japan from the perspective of a present sending country.

## Outline of the Projects

**Title: Building a comprehensive platform for systems related to the acceptance of foreign workers**

**Project Representative : Shohei Sugita**

The number of foreign workers in Japan is increasing, with 1.46 million foreign workers working in Japan as of the end of October 2018. Many foreigners who work in Japan work with a status of residence that is not intended for employment. The number of foreigners who have chosen to work in Japan is increasing, but the process to work in Japan is very transparent. Companies that want to hire foreigners also have no means of accessing information such as what institutions are involved and what costs are incurred. In addition, the technical internship system and the specific skill system started in April 2019 are difficult to understand because the system is difficult. In such an environment, even if a company that wants to employ foreigners complies with the law, it cannot fully know the contents of the law that must be complied with. Without knowing it, it would be against the law. Therefore, this project contributes to the transparency of the legal system for foreign employment by building a platform for collecting laws of foreign workers home countries, immigration laws and labor-related laws, and disclosing information. It contributes to the transparency of the human employment process.

### Activities under COVID-19:

- Instead of face-to-face study groups, e-learning materials have been developed for individuals coming to Japan to work and their host companies.
- While building a learning portal website for visitors to Japan, we have discussed ways of repairing the website together with JICA and other organizations.

**Title: Enhancing the Capacity of Countries of Origin in Facilitating Equitable Migration to Japan**

**Project Representative : Reiko Harima**

The proposed project aims to contribute towards a more inclusive society by making migration a more equitable experience. It will focus on migration from Myanmar, Cambodia and Vietnam to Japan, in light of the growing trends of migration from these countries and given the limited experience and capacity of these countries of origin in facilitating migration. Country visits will be organised to Myanmar, Cambodia and Japan to facilitate mutual learning on responses to migration, collectively identify good practice and lessons learnt, and develop recommendations. The project will produce a short film on migration from these countries of origin to Japan to raise awareness, publish an advocacy paper presenting good practice and recommendations and develop a handbook for civil society organisations (CSOs) in Myanmar, Cambodia and Vietnam who will provide support to migrants going to Japan. The proposal is based on the needs collectively identified by CSOs in the region, given the limited knowledge, experiences and capacity of CSOs in responding to the rapidly growing trends of migration to Japan. The outputs are expected to have ripple effects and enhance the capacity of the relevant countries of origin to adequately facilitate migration to Japan.

### Activities under COVID-19:

- Our plan was to produce a handbook after visiting the various countries, but we communicated online and made a draft of the handbook first.
- The group is due to consider film production, and will also touch on the impact of Covid-19 on prospective travelers to and residents of Japan.

## Institutional transparency and inertial forces



Sugita

Some parts of the process that foreigners go through to come to Japan to work are not always visible. The goal is to improve transparency in areas that are otherwise a black box for workers, so that a kind of self-cleansing can take place. From the Meiji period until just before World War II, Japan was a sending country, and looking back at the system at that time, we can see that it shared some of the current problems in accepting immigrants. In the international movement of people, just because a system has been established does not mean that it will be used immediately. There are studies that show that inertial forces, including historical and geographical factors, come into play, and we need to take such forces into account in our approach.

The movement of people has a great deal to do with security, and I find it very interesting that the occurrence of a single emergency can have such an impact that it overcomes any inertia.



Okabe

## Protecting workers' rights from the bottom up



Harima

I think the Mekong region is one where you can think of people moving first and borders and systems being established later. MMN works to protect human rights that have been violated in this context. The movement of people in the region was basically illegal, and the ability to make policy recommendations was limited, but the democratization of Myanmar in 2011 made it possible to openly discuss the movement of people throughout the region. We aim to create a situation in which workers are unlikely to have their rights violated because they themselves have a proper understanding of their rights and other information. I think that Japan can play a role in this process. I believe that migrant workers who have had a good experience in Japan will have a positive impact on the relationship between their country of origin and Japan.

My hope is that Japanese efforts will let us overcome the challenges, and at the same time, I believe we can use ASEAN effectively as a framework for maintaining and expanding the liberal order in Asia. I look forward to a future agenda that considers migrant labor and the rights of workers.



Okabe

## From the audience



**What can Japan, a former sending country, teach us?**

**Sugita:** I believe there is much we can learn from each other's history. People who emigrated from Japan also did so in the spirit of contributing to their communities, a strong point they always emphasized. I think it is the same for today's technical trainees. I also think that the role of a safety net, such as Japanese communities that accepted immigrants in the past, is something Japan can teach. On the other hand, I think we can also share lessons learned from flaws within the system.



**How can the selection of sending organizations be kept independent of personal connections so that there is fair competition among organizations?**

**Harima:** Information is very limited, especially for those who have not yet decided to travel. One way is to use organizations like the Migrant Resource Center, currently being promoted by the ILO, to spread information.

**Moderator: Hideo Tone** (Program Officer, The Toyota Foundation)

In the fifth session, we reviewed and summarized the seminar series with serving commentators Shizuyo Yoshitomi and Midori Okabe, as well as Shigeto Sonoda, chair of the selection committee for the International Grant Program.

The panelists discussed issues related to the movement of people in the international community, as well as the current situation and prospects for the acceptance of foreigners in Japanese society based on past history. They were also asked about the significance of mutual learning and knowledge sharing between countries and sectors by researchers, people in the field, and people related to both sending and receiving countries.

### **Looking Back at 4 Seminars: An Inseparable Relationship Between Asia and Japan Emerges**

**Yoshitomi:** Looking back on the first and second online seminar, I feel that there is a microcosm of Japanese society, where different cultures coexist, in the field of medicine and nursing care. The wisdom and experience of both sending and receiving countries is important, and the real “mutual learning” with which people have tried to solve their problems with diverse perspectives and approaches has been impressive.

**Okabe:** The third and fourth discussions provided suggestions on how to guarantee the social, economic and political rights of foreigners coming to Japan, and how to accept foreigners in a way that creates a win-win relationship for Japanese communities, that is, the Japanese people living there.

In a broader sense, the acceptance of foreigners is also a challenge of “human security”.

**Sonoda:** After watching the four seminars, I felt that understanding and thinking about the issues between Japan and Asia should be discussed within the context of their relationship, including the gap between them, and that they cannot be considered separately. The themes of the first and second seminars were set at the community level, whereas the third and fourth seminars were about national institutions. It became clear, however, that in reality these are intricately intertwined.

### **Settlement in societies based on history: Who are “foreigners”?**

**Yoshitomi:** We have a long history of immigration, with some 4th and 5th generation Koreans living in Japan, and 10,000 to 15,000 people obtaining Japanese nationality every year. There are so many people with foreign roots in various fields that it is impossible to talk in terms of foreigners and Japanese anymore. I hope that more and more people become aware of the fact as human beings we all share responsibility for Japanese society, and that policies and systems based on this awareness will be realized.

**Okabe:** When I met a German-Brazilian in Oxford, UK, I was surprised that the first thing he talked about was the contribution of Japanese-Brazilians to Brazilian society, and how Brazilians have a positive image of Japan and people of Japanese descent because of it. There are downsides to creating boundaries between Japanese and foreigners, but I also felt that we should learn to be proud and respectful of our ethnicities.

### **The state and the individual: An opinion survey of Asian youths**

**Sonoda:** Over the past 10 years or more, we have conducted three major opinion surveys of university students in 11 Asian countries, including Japan. What we found was that while the three Northeast Asian countries (Japan, South Korea, and China) do not have a good national image of each other, they do have close personal ties, and only a small percentage of people want those from another country to leave. On the other hand, while Southeast Asian countries have a very good image of Japan and other Northeast Asian countries, human ties are still weak, and when something troublesome occurs, a higher percentage of Southeast Asians may feel they want such-and-such people to leave. I believe that



## Coordinator



**Shigeto Sonoda**

Professor of Sociology and Asian Studies, Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia, The University of Tokyo, selection committee chair for the International Grant Program

His special interest is in social stratification and globalization of cultures in Asia, localization process of Japanese company in Asian countries, and Asian views of the rise of China. He has conducted a variety of researches including Four-city Survey in China (1997-2014) and Asian Student Survey (2008-2018). His latest publications include: *National Sentiments in Asia* (2020), *Risk in East Asia* (editor, 2013), *Social Inequality in Contemporary China* (2008, awarded Special Prize of 20th Asia-Pacific Award).

## Commentators



**Shizuyo Yoshitomi**

Professor,  
School of Global Governance and Collaboration,  
Nagoya University of Foreign Studies



**Midori Okabe**

Professor,  
Department of International Legal Studies,  
Faculty of Law, Sophia University

the image of a country and the connections between individuals are at different levels, and that weak connections between individuals can hamper the social acceptance of people coming from that country.

### **Japanese policies and institutions from an international perspective: Insufficient protection of human rights for Japanese people**

**Okabe:** Japan's system for accepting foreigners used to be evaluated as poor, especially in Western studies. Recently, however, it has been pointed out that the system is not necessarily discriminatory or exclusionary to foreigners, but that there is no institutionalized awareness of human rights protection, including that for Japanese people. It is true that our domestic system is still lacking in many ways.

On the other hand, Japan's response to refugees and forced migration in the field of international cooperation is highly praised worldwide. I heard that UNHCR's current refugee protection program is based on JICA's program. Apparently, international organizations have come to appreciate approaches such as reducing unnecessary movement of people by paying attention to a wide range of social and economic factors, developing social infrastructure, and providing care such as livelihood support. I believe it is necessary to evaluate not only a country's domestic systems but also its global contribution.

### **The significance of mutual learning: The role of International Grant Programs**

**Yoshitomi:** The movement of people involves every aspect of social life. It reminds me that this kind of grant program can be used as a mechanism for both the sending country and the receiving country to learn from each other. I also believe there are many things such countries can learn from each other in domestic issues and efforts in the field of international cooperation, and I have expectations for the current trend of collaboration between international cooperation NGOs and domestic organizations.

**Okabe:** This seminar has made me realize that the grant program scheme is being used effectively. The gap in information, where intentions are not conveyed correctly, is not limited to Japan and Asia, but is occurring all over the world. I think that having this kind of framework for sharing is important, as there are limits to what governments can do. Institutionalization will go ahead from now on, but there are concerns about potential distortion caused by too much progress. I think it may be better to have a more relaxed form of communication and coexistence between ethnicities.

**Sonoda:** In sports, there is a system of "home" and "away" matches. When it comes to migration in Asia, some "away" (sending countries) changed to be "home" (receiving countries), but the players (those who are moving) cannot be changed. I think it is very important to promote mutual understanding between "home" and "away" by imagining each other's positions and ideas in order to avoid becoming egocentric. Things may not always go smoothly as expected, but we will continue to support various proposals for mutual learning among Asia in the future.

# The Toyota Foundation



The Toyota Foundation is a grant-making foundation established in 1974 by the Toyota Motor Corporation. It views events from a global perspective as it works to support activities that bring broad, long-term benefits to society. The Toyota Foundation identifies issues in a wide range of areas in line with current needs, including human and natural environments, social welfare, and education and culture, and provides grants for research and projects that address these issues.

## International Grant Program



The grant program focuses on deepening mutual understanding and knowledge-sharing among people on the ground in East and Southeast Asia who are finding solutions to shared issues. Through promoting direct interaction among key players, the grant program aims to survey and analyze situations in target countries, obtain new perspectives, and expand the potential of future generations.

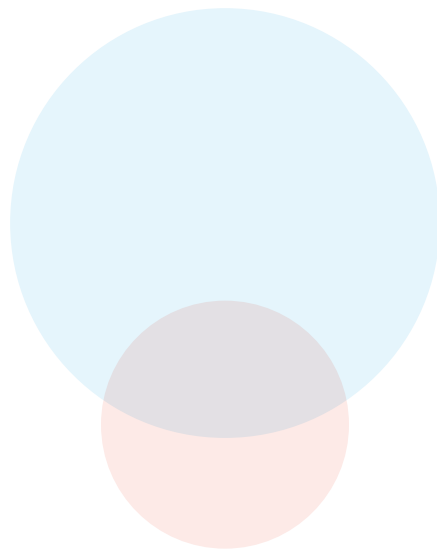
With multinational teams comprised of participants from diverse backgrounds, projects can avoid conventional linear relationships, such as “supporter and supported” or “instructor and trainee,” and instead form cooperative and creative alliances that consider, act on, and construct solutions to shared issues. The grant program anticipates that these partnerships, which extend beyond such factors as nationality, age, and organizational affiliation, will produce significant social change through fostering a process of mutual learning.

# Special Subject “Migrants and Japanese Society”



The grant program titled “Migrants and Japanese Society” targets five issues with which applicants struggle. During the grant period, we request applications from projects designed for building mechanisms and systems to bring solutions to the issues and achieve improvements, and for deepening insights in issues related to the acceptance of foreign human resources.

- (1) Creation of an environment for maximizing the skills and potential of foreign human resources
- (2) Minimizing gaps among foreign human resources in their access to information
- (3) Review of human resources leading the care and support system and of existing resources
- (4) Attracting skilled human resources
- (5) Learning and lessons from insights and experiences gained through Japanese companies' overseas operations



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Access to the digest movies with English subtitles.

日本語



<https://www.youtube.com/c/TheToyotaFoundation>

English



<https://www.toyotafound.or.jp/english/international/2020/toyotafound/2021-0210-0944-5.html>

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