

Listening to the Views of Migrants

Japanese and Korean Societies Living with Migrants

Present and Future

Japan and Korea are currently experiencing unprecedented socio-economic changes triggered by a shrinking population stemming from a declining birthrate and an aging population, and from a more culturally and racially diversified society brought about by an increasing number of migrants. Such socio-economic changes pose new challenges to the existing systems of education, health, labor, and welfare. At the same time, they provide an opportunity to come up with new ideas for the society to set up systems that would benefit from the migrants' diversity while guaranteeing their human rights.

For Japan and Korea to establish new systems in response to these socio-economic changes, it is essential to listen to the views of migrants and their communities as they will be the ones to be directly affected by the laws and policies put in place. Migrant communities should be given due recognition, with their voices heard and their roles in society acknowledged.

In this symposium, migrants living in Japan and Korea, as well as experts from both countries who are leading various initiatives to support them, will discuss the current situation in Japan and Korea where the influx of migrants have led to greater cultural and racial diversity in their societies. Participants will also discuss how all parties can gather force to create societies that can respond to the needs of diverse groups of people.

*This symposium aims to disseminate findings of JCIE's 2-year project on "Policy recommendations to be made by migrants through proactive exchange and learning among migrants in Japan and Korea" supported by the Toyota Foundation International Grant Program since autumn 2017. The project is intended to re-examine the current situation from the perspective of migrants by communicating with them and their communities in Japan and Korea, and to explore future directions and specific measures.



AGENDA

14:00–14:05 Opening Remarks
Akio Okawara, *President and CEO, JCIE*

**14:05–15:30 SESSION 1 Societies living with Migrants:
Japan and Korea**

(Japanese-Korean simultaneous translation available)

**14:05–14:30 OVERVIEW Policies on Immigration and Migrants in Japan
and Korea**
Hyejin Lee, *Senior Program Officer, JCIE*

**14:30–15:30 PANEL DISCUSSION
Prospects for Societies Living with Migrants
(Japan and Korea)**
MODERATOR: Hyejin Lee
PANELISTS: Ippei Torii, Toshihiro Menju, Wan Lee, Wonjun Seok

15:30–15:45 (Coffee Break)

**15:45–17:50 SESSION 2 Listening to the Views of Migrants in
Japan and Korea**

**15:45–16:30 DIALOGUE Living as Migrants Across Generations and
Spaces**
(Japanese-English simultaneous translation)
MODERATOR: Wan Lee
SPEAKERS: Seul-gi Kang, Rey Ventura

**16:30–17:50 PANEL DISCUSSION
Migrants' Perspective: Present and Future of
Japanese and Korean Societies Living with
Migrants**
(Japanese-Korean simultaneous translation)
MODERATOR: Toshihiro Menju
PANELISTS: Marip Seng Bu, Tran Phuong Nam, Bhupal Man
Shrestha, Soe Moe Thu, Seul-gi Kang

17:50–18:00 Closing Remarks





Akio Okawara

President and CEO, Japan Center for International Exchange (JCIE)

Akio Okawara is president and CEO of the Japan Center for International Exchange (JCIE), one of the leading independent, non-profit organizations in the field of international affairs in Japan. He assumed the position in April 2014 after a long career in international business. He is concurrently appointed panel member of the US-Japan Conference on Cultural and Educational Interchange (CULCON) and a member of the Foundation Council of the Japanese-German Center Berlin. At JCIE, he also serves as Japanese director of the UK-Japan 21st Century Group, chair of the Roundtable on Japan's Migration, and director of the Global Health and Human Security Program Executive Committee and of the Friends of the Global Fund, Japan (FGFJ), among others.

Prior to joining JCIE, he was executive director of the Sumitomo Shoji Research Institute from 2006 to 2013, where he oversaw research and analysis on domestic and international political and economic trends. He started his career at Sumitomo Corporation in 1973 and served in the automotive, overseas transport, and research departments during the span of his 40-year career with the company, including several assignments in the United States. Mr. Okawara graduated from Keio University with a BA in law and also studied at Williams College in Massachusetts.

SESSION 1 Societies living with Migrants: Japan and Korea



Hyejin Lee

Senior Program Officer, Japan Center for International Exchange (JCIE)

Hyejin Lee is from South Korea coming to Japan in 2003 as a student. After completing the PhD course in sociology at Hitotsubashi University, she worked as research fellow at Hitotsubashi University and Ochanomizu University. In November 2014, she joined JCIE, and as a migrant herself, she has been conducting researches on migration policy of Japan and labor migration in Asia, as well as actively participating in various activities to support migrants. She has been a visiting researcher at the Institute of Comparative Economic Studies of Hosei University. Her publication includes “Challenges of and Coping with Immigration in Korea: The State, Civil Society, and Migrant Workers” (*Asia on the Move: Regional Migration and the Role of Civil Society*, JCIE, 2015), and “Towareru ‘ichiji-teki’ koyou no hasso – kankoku wo rei ni gaikokujin seisaku wo kangaeru (Temporary Employment in Review – A Perspective on Policy for Foreigners from a Korean Experience)” (Asahi Newspaper Press, Journalism, No. 348, 2019).





Wan Lee

Former Chief Representative, Solidarity for Asian Human Rights and Culture

After graduating from university, Wan Lee started getting involved in activities to support migrants working as a counsellor of the Bucheon Foreign Worker's House in Korea. In 2004, he participated in the establishment of the Solidarity for Asian Human Rights and Culture, and he served as its chief representative until 2018. He has worked as planning and implementation supervisor of the Korean Ministry of Tourism's "Migrants Arirang" (2006–08) and "Festival of All Korean Regions' Migrants' Life and Culture" (2007–08). He also had been chief representative of an NGO for the UN Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. He is active in conducting research on racial discrimination and cultural diversity, and worked as Korean Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism's counsel member on "Cultural Diversity" related works (2014–), director of capacity development course (2015, 2018), and member of the Special Committee to Respond to Hatred Discrimination of the Korean Human Rights Committee.



Wonjung Seok

Director, Group for Human Rights of Foreign Migrant Workers

Wonjung Seok started participating in labor movement as a student, and since the establishment of the Group for Human Rights of Foreign Migrant Workers in 2000, she has been involved in activities for the protection and improvement of migrants' human rights, including counselling workers, research, policy recommendation, and organization of migrant communities. Since 2015, she serves as director of the Seongdong Foreign Worker Center, Seoul City's support wing for migrants, and as co-representative and operations director of the Joint Committee with Migrants in Korea or the Korean network of groups for supporting migrants. Since 2016, she has been working on protecting basic human rights of children and juveniles with foreign roots as a member of the Network for Basic Human Rights of Children and Juveniles with Migration Background. She also works as counsel member of the Korean Human Rights Committee and the Ministry of Justice.



Ippei Torii

Secretary General, Solidarity Network with Migrants Japan

Since 1990, Ippei Torii has been working in support of protecting the rights of foreign workers. In 1993 he organized the Spring Labor Offensive (Shunto) for foreign workers, and had raised awareness for issues around foreign workers in Japanese communities. Since 2005, he has dedicated his efforts to support foreign technical training interns by highlighting their actual working conditions, i.e., working below minimum wage at JPY 300 per hour. In 2013, he was awarded the Trafficking in Persons Report Heroes by the US Department of State for his work in uncovering the conditions of the Technical Training Interns Program which is often criticized as “contemporary forced labor” and for his dedicated leadership in supporting foreign workers. He also serves as a member of the operations committee of the Network for Foreign Technical Training Interns, a special executive member and co-representative of Zentouitsu Workers Union, co-representative of the Japan Network against Trafficking in Persons, secretary general of the Small and Medium Labor Union Policy Network, and chief executive of Self Production Network.



Toshihiro Menju

Managing Director and Chief Program Officer, Japan Center for International Exchange (JCIE)

Toshihiro Menju joined JCIE in 1988 after working in the Hyogo Prefectural Government for 10 years. He has worked on various initiatives on multicultural cooperative community, migration policy, and grass-roots international exchange. He lectures at Keio and other universities. He serves as a member of the Japanese Cabinet Secretariat's Regional Attraction Creation Expert Committee (2018), Cultural Affairs Counsel of the Agency for Cultural Affairs, Japanese Language Committee of National Language Sub-Group (2019-), and chairman of Shinjuku Committee for Multicultural Cooperative Community (2012-). Mr. Menju is author of dozens of books, including “Genkai Kokka—jinkou genshou de Nihon ga semarareru saishu sentaku (Marginal Nation—Depopulating Presses Japan for Ultimate Choice)” (Asahi Newspaper Publications, 2017). The November 2018 article in a monthly magazine of *Bungeishunju*, “Boukoku no imin seisaku (Migration Policy Ruining a Nation)” received the 2018 Annual Readers' Award.

Mr. Menju completed his BA in law at Keio University and a master's in public policy at Evergreen State College.



SESSION 2 Listening to the Views of Migrants in Japan and Korea



Seul-gi Kang

Activist, Uijeongbu EXODUS Migrant Center

Seul-gi Kang is a second generation migrant, born of a Filipino father and a Korean mother. Born in Korea, she was raised in the Philippines for three years from age 4. After graduating high school in Korea, she conducted, in the Philippines, a focus group interview of children in poor region and Kopino (children born between Korean and Filipino parents), while studying international development at Miriam University in the Philippines. After graduating from university, she worked on regional development operations in Africa for three years as an activist for UNESCO Korean Committee and an international NGO. Upon returning from Africa, she worked in a Korean NPO in charge of organizing residents' movement and international networking. Since 2014, she is working at the Uijeongbu EXODUS Migrant Center to help support migrants.



Rey Ventura

Journalist and visual creator

In 1987, Rey Ventura came to Japan as a student. He stayed in Japan after expiration of his student visa, and worked as a day laborer for one year in Kotobuki-cho, Yokohama. In 1992, he published this experience as "Underground in Japan" (Jonathan Cape). From 1996 through 2000, he worked as a Manila correspondent of the Asia Press International. He is currently teaching journalism and English at universities, while doing volunteer activities at an NPO. Among his publications are: *Into the Country of Standing Men* (Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2007), *Cherry Blossoms in the Times of Tsunami and Tsunami* (Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2014), among others.



Bhupal Man Shrestha

Chairman, Everest International School Japan

Bhupal Man Shrestha is from Nepal who came to Japan in 2003 for higher study. He completed his Ph.D. in economics in 2011 from Soka University. After that, he founded a joint venture company named GMT International Co. Ltd. in Shinjuku, Tokyo which published first Nepalese newspaper in Japan and worked as the Managing Director in the company. In April 2013, he established the Everest International School, Japan, for children of Nepalese immigrants in Japan. The purpose of this school is to provide English medium education with Nepalese culture and language for the immigrant Nepalese children. This school is authorized by the government of Nepal and first of its kind. Bhupal Man Shrestha serves as the chairman of the school. He is also actively involved in various activities of the Nepalese community in Japan. He served as an active member of the Shinjuku Committee for Multicultural Cooperative Community (2012-2018) and he is working as a member of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government's Committee for Promotion of Multicultural Cooperative Community since 2017. He also works as part time lecturer in Chiba University of Commerce and Soka University.

**Soe Moe Thu**

Chairman of Operations Committee, Korean Center for Myanmar Worker's Welfare

In 1995, Soe Moe Thu came to Korea from Myanmar. In 2003, he joined the migrants' movement and also played in "Stop Crackdown", a multicultural band composed of migrants. He worked as an executive of Burma Action Korea and as chief representative and principal director for the documentary on "Migrant Workers TV". In 2013, he started "Padauk Glory", a cooperative style company with the Myanmar community in Korea, and is active on protecting human rights and supporting children and the poor in the Myanmar community in Korea. He worked on the establishment of the Korean Center for Myanmar Worker's Welfare to promote protection of human rights and provide education for the Myanmar community in Korea, and serves as chairman of the Operations Committee. He received the "2010 Human Rights Award" from Korean Human Rights Foundation, and "Human Rights Award" from Korean Human Rights Committee. In 2011, he was officially recognized a refugee status by the Supreme Court of Korea.

**Tran Phuong Nam**

Secretariat, Vietnamese Association in Japan

Originally from Vietnam, Tran Phuong Nam arrived in Japan in 2006 as a student. Working as a delivery person receiving scholarship from *Asahi Shimbun*, he completed his studies at the vocational school and was admitted to the Tokyo University of Technology. He left the university his junior year and worked in a lettuce-growing farm in Nagano Prefecture, followed by a period of working as a system engineer at an IT vendor company, then as a bridge system engineer for another IT venture run by a Vietnamese owner. In 2018, he obtained his current job at the Vietnamese Association in Japan.

Nam had been involved in establishing the Vietnamese Students' Support Center in Kawasaki in 2013 and had been actively involved in providing support to foreign students and youth from Vietnam as a deputy manager of PR in the Vietnamese Youth and Student Association in Japan. He has also been an active member in various multicultural exchange programs, including the organization of the "Vietnam Festival in Kawasaki" and the "Vietnam Festival in Kanagawa".

**Marip Seng Bu**

Chairman, PEACE (NPO)

Marip Seng Bu arrived in Japan as a refugee in 1992. She organized the Kachin Community in Japan (2005) to support groups of refugees in Japan and abroad, and the Refugee Coordination Committee Japan (RCCJ) as a network for refugees (2008). In 2012, she started PEACE(NPO) to support the minority ethnic groups in Myanmar and serves as its chairman. Focusing on education and peace building, she runs a Japanese language education program for adults and a Myanmar language education for children with Myanmar roots. At RCCJ, she runs a study support program for second generation children of refugees in Japan in cooperation with a students' group "J-FUN Youth". Since 2012, she is a member of Shinjuku Committee for Multicultural Cooperative Community.



