To our readers,

I am glad to present you the latest issue of Voices from Japan featuring Women’s Poverty in Japan. Poverty in one of the richest countries in the world has recently gained media attention after a number of young men, many of them with university degrees, joined the rank of poorly paid unstable informal workers, following the massive deregulation under the Koizumi Administration. The issue had become so pressing that the Government could no longer ignore, when many young workers lost their jobs and shelters, hit by the financial tsunami in the end of 2008. Probably this has been one of the reasons behind the sliding victory of the opposition party in the recent election. However, as Chisa Fujiwara argues in this issue, this rediscovery of poverty in Japan is deeply gender biased. Despite the fact that women were the first target of deregulation of labor standards since 1980s, it is depicted as problem for young men who cannot get married to because they cannot financially support wives and children. Such idea of men as primary breadwinners is often shared with progressive men within anti-poverty movement. That is why we formed Women and Poverty Network and published the Japanese edition of this issue in March 2009. How differently do women and men experience poverty? What makes women’s poverty so invisible and so natural? How gender, sexuality, race, nationality and ablism intersect in women’s experience of poverty? And how does a social safety network for women look like? These are the questions we ask ourselves when we edited it and I hope you find them relevant. Women’s poverty is truly a global issue that requires transnational efforts and solidarity. Let us keep exchanging thoughts and experience to this end. Lastly, I would like to thank volunteer translators and proofreaders who have made this publication possible.

Hisako Motoyama
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