

Joint Statement

Protesting the Government's Hasty Decision to Introduce "Foreign Human Resources for Domestic Work Support" and Demanding the Ratification of ILO Domestic Workers Convention (C189)

The Japanese government, on 24 June, adopted at a cabinet meeting "the Revision of Japan Revitalization Strategy (June 2014)". The revised strategy includes a measure to bring in "Foreign Human Resources for Domestic Work Support" in National Strategic Zones, in the name of "Promotion of Women's Participation and Working Style Reform." We protest this measure as it hinders the equitable participation of men and women in domestic work. At the same time, we urgently demand the ratification by the Japanese government of ILO "Convention concerning decent work for domestic workers" (C189, adopted: Geneva, 100th ILC session [16 June 2011]).

1) Government policy hinders the equitable participation of men and women in domestic work.

Japan ranks among the top of OECD nations in terms of having the longest working hours for men, coupled with the shortest hours spent in household work. Norms of long work hours among men and exclusive reliance on women for domestic work have resulted in frequent death from overwork among men and have hindered women's equitable participation in the labor market. The ILO and other United Nations Human Rights organizations have repeatedly advised the Japanese government to rectify long working hours and to establish parity of treatment for irregular workers, so that men and women are able to equally share in paid and unpaid labor.

As it is, instead of regulating extended hours of work, the Revised Strategy establishes a path towards a labor system that "compensates on the basis of outcome, rather than hours of labor," albeit with some limits based on yearly income. Moreover, while the government celebrates the promotion of further active participation by women in the labor market, there is no concrete means of support or numerical target goals for men's active participation in housework, childcare and eldercare, or the tending for infirm.

On the other hand, domestic work support service, referred to in the Revised Strategy as one of the means of promoting women's active labor participation, is not affordable for women with low income, those who actually most need such support. With further intensification of labor for both men and women, we find ourselves in a situation where we will all be forced to work even harder. We, therefore, strongly condemn the policy of "Promotion of Women's Participation" that amplifies gender inequity as well as economic disparity.

2) Guarantee rights to all workers working for and in private households.

The revised “Japan Revitalization Strategy” also declares its intention to utilize local women’s labor as well as foreign workers in the field of household, childcare, and other care-related services. The very nature of work in private households, with its particularities such as malleable working hours, unclear job assignments and a high incidence of harassment puts workers in a vulnerable position. Such risks would be even greater for foreign workers. Moreover, by formally placing “domestic servants (*kaji shiyonin*)” beyond the purview of Japanese labor standard laws, the Japanese government transgresses the purposes of the ILO Domestic Workers Convention, a convention that it affirmed by its own vote.

In view of this situation, we strongly urge the government to promptly tend to the adaptation of domestic laws towards the ratification of ILO Domestic Workers Convention in order to protect the rights of all people working in private homes, including migrant women already living and working in Japan, and to avoid the hasty and inappropriate reception of foreign domestic workers.

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Asia-Japan Women’s Resource Center (AJWRC)
Solidary Network with Migrants Japan (SMJ)