

# STATE OF WOMEN IN URBAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT JAPAN

## 1. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE COUNTRY

### 1.1 Socio-economic profile

Population of Japan was 126 millions in 1997, which ranked 8<sup>th</sup> in the world. Female ratio has been constantly around 51 per cent. With lower birth and mortality rates, Japan has an aging population.

Japan has been going through a massive shift of its economic structure since the last 10 years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. After the economic boom of the 1980s, the longest recession since the end of the World War II started with the collapse of the stock market in 1990. Since the fiscal year 1992, the economic growth rates have been less than 1 per cent except in 1995 and 1996, reaching -2.0 per cent in the fiscal year 1998<sup>1</sup>. The unemployment rates, which always hovered around 2 per cent until mid 1990s, have been rapidly increasing from 3 per cent in 1995 to 4.1 per cent (female: 4.0 per cent, male: 4.2 per cent) in 1998 and reached a record high 4.8 per cent in March 1999<sup>2</sup>. The sluggish economic situation forced Japanese enterprises and industries to opt for drastic restructuring.

**Table 1: Population and GDP per capita**

	Population (in thousands)			GDP per capita (\$) (108yen=1\$)
	Total	Female	Male	
1960	93,419	47,541	45,878	1,657
1970	103,720	52,802	50,918	6,694
1980	117,060	59,467	57,594	19,435
1990	123,611	62,914	60,697	32,889
1997	126,166	64,361	61,805	37,074

Source: Management and Coordination Agency, *Japan Statistical Yearbook 1999* (for population), Economic Planning Agency, *White Paper on Economy 1999* (for GDP).

It has been revealed that the recession has had several important gender implications. The most affected from the retrenchment of the labour force includes female newly graduates from universities and colleges as many enterprises announced that they would not recruit women.

Another impact on the labour force is an increase of part-timers and out-sourcing of employees which has been widely adopted by many leading firms as a strategy for elastic utilization of the labour force. Women form 68 per cent of the part-timers at the moment, and percentage of part-timers among women workers has been increasing to 37.4 per cent in 1999 from 27.9 per cent in 1990<sup>3</sup>. Since it is also reported that the wage gap between women part-timers and full-time workers (both female and male) has been widening<sup>4</sup>, it is feared that many women are now forced

<sup>1</sup> Economic Planning Agency, *White Paper on Economy 1999*.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Labour, *White Paper on Women's Labour 1999*.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

to work under less stable and less rewarding conditions.

**Table 2: Gross enrolment ratios (per cent)**

	Primary		Lower/Upper Secondary		Tertiary	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
1980	101	101	94	92	20	40
1985	102	102	96	94	20	36
1990	100	100	98	96	23	36
1996	102	101	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

Source: 1998 UNESCO Statistical Yearbook.

Female enrolment at primary and lower/upper secondary level is almost equal with men, though enrolment at tertiary level still shows a substantial gap as is shown in Table 2. In 1999, female ratio among undergraduate students was 36.2 per cent and it dropped to 24.9 per cent among Ph.D. students<sup>5</sup>. Another important gender feature is a low female enrolment in science-related faculties, though it has increased significantly during the last few decades. Women account for only 9.8 per cent among undergraduate students at faculties of engineering, 25.2 per cent at faculties of science and 32.8 per cent at faculties of medicine and dental surgery.<sup>6</sup>

**Table 3: Major health indicators**

	Infant Mortality Rate	Maternal Mortality Rate	Total Fertility Rate
1960	30.7	117.5	2.00
1970	13.1	48.7	2.13
1980	7.5	19.5	1.75
1990	4.6	8.2	1.54
1998	3.6	6.9	1.38

Source: Ministry of Health and Welfare, *Vital Statistics of Japan 1998*.

Major indicators concerning women's health improved significantly during the last 40 years. Total fertility rate, which was 4.5 in 1947, decreased drastically due to the improvement of child health and less incentive for childbirth after the World War II, and it was around 2 per cent until 1975. It numbered 1.54 per cent in 1990 and kept decreasing to a record low of 1.38 per cent in 1998. This is believed to cast a shadow on Japan's future social security system. Though late marriage was regarded as the biggest factor behind the low fertility rate by the White Paper on Gender Equality 2000<sup>7</sup>, various reasons including insufficient social support for working mothers discourage women from bearing children.

Women account for around 40 per cent of the labour force. Female labour force participation rate has been around 50 per cent during the 1990s, while that of males has been gradually decreasing. One of the important features of Japanese women

<sup>5</sup> Prime Minister's Office, *White Paper on Gender Equality 2000*.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

in the labour force is their low wages. Average monthly female wage was only 51.1 per cent of male wage in 1997.<sup>8</sup>

**Table 4: Women in the labour force**

	Labour Force (in 10 thousands)	Female Ratio in Labour Force	Labour Force Participation Rate		Wages as % of Male Wages
			Female	Male	
1970	5,153	39.3	n.a.	n.a.	
1975	n.a.	n.a.	45.7	81.4	
1980	5,650	38.7	47.6	79.8	
1990	6,384	40.6	50.1	77.2	49.6
1997	6,787	40.7	50.4	77.7	51.1
1999			49.6	76.9	

Source: Management and Coordination Agency, *Japan Statistical Yearbook 1999* Prime Minister's Office, *White Paper on Gender Equality 2000* (for 1999 figures). Horupu, *White Paper on Women 1999* (for wages as per cent of male wages).

With regard to working pattern of Japanese women, the so-called aged-based M-curved labour force participation rate can be pointed out as a remarkable characteristic. Female labour force participation rates are highest in the age groups of early 20s and late 40s, and are lowest in the age groups of 30s to early 40s. This indicates that many women are forced to leave the labour force to pursue their responsibilities either as wives or mothers around the age of 30 and come back in their 40s when they are less occupied. Their re-entry into the labour force is mostly as part-timers and their working conditions are less stable and favorable than the first entry in most cases.

## 1.2 Politics and governance

Japan is a constitutional monarchy in which the Emperor is designated as the symbol of the State and sovereignty resides with the people. Democracy is ensured through a distribution of power between the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of governments. The Diet, the legislative branch, is defined as “the highest organ of state power” by the constitution. Executive power is exercised by a prime minister chosen by the Diet and by the cabinet she or he appoints.

The Diet consists of 2 chambers, the House of Representatives and the House of Councilors, and its members are elected by the popular vote. The House of Representatives, or the lower house, consists of 480 members whose term is 4 years unless it is dissolved earlier, and the House of Councilors, or the upper house, consists of 252 members whose term is 6 years. Half of the representatives of the House of Councilors are elected every 3 years. Those over 25 years old are eligible for running for the House of Representatives, while for the House of Councilors, it is those over 30 years old. Retirement age does not exist. Though a bill becomes a law on passage by both Houses, the House of Representatives has predominant authority concerning several important matters.

<sup>8</sup> For workers including part-timers at offices of more than 30 employees.

Local government comprises 47 prefectures, 12 specially designated cities (mega cities which are delegated substantial authority and are allowed to divide their administration into wards), 659 cities<sup>9</sup>, 23 special wards of Tokyo Metropolitan Government (wards with legislative authority), and 2,558 towns and villages<sup>10</sup>. Heads of each local government and representatives of its assembly are elected by the popular vote every 4 years. Deputy heads of local governments, such as vice governors and deputy mayors, are appointed and are usually high-ranking officials, either of the central government or the respective local governments.

Women's suffrage was acquired in 1946, 20 years later than the male suffrage in 1925. Women and men over 20 years have the right to vote. Women cast their vote for the first time in the 1946 General Election and sent as many as 38 women to the House of Representatives or 8.4 per cent of the total members, which until now remains the highest percentage of female representatives in the House of Representatives.

Japan's government officials enter the civil service through open competitive recruitment, which is classified according to academic qualifications and the nature of the service. National and respective local governments administer the recruitment of their officials independently.

### 1.3 Participation and representation of women in politics

Women's voting rate has been constantly higher than that of men since the 1968 Ordinary Election for the House of Councilors. This redresses the stereotypical view, still shared by the general public in Japan that women are not interested in politics.

Table 5: Voting rate

House of Representatives			House of Councilors			Unified Local Election				
						Prefecture Assemblies			City Councils	
Year	Female	Male	Year	Female	Male	Year	Female	Male	Female	Male
1972	72.5	71.0	1977	69.3	67.7	1963	77.0	76.7	83.5	81.0
1980	75.4	73.7	1986	72.5	70.2	1975	75.2	73.0	79.5	75.5
1990	74.6	71.9	1995	44.4	44.7	1987	68.4	64.9	72.6	67.9
1996	60.2	59.0	1998	59.3	58.4	1999	58.1	55.2	62.9	58.5

Source: Management and Coordination Agency, *Japan Statistical Yearbook 1999*

The female representation at national and local legislative branches is presented in Table 6 and Table 7. Though female ratio among the representatives has seen considerable increase in the last 10 years, it still remains low compared with other

<sup>9</sup> The basic requirement to be designated as a city is that it has a population of 50,000. In this report, urban local governments refer to prefectures, cities including specially designated cities, and special wards of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government.

<sup>10</sup> As of July 2000.

countries, which subsequently keeps Japan's GEM (Gender Empowerment Measure) quite low. It ranked 41<sup>st</sup> in the Human Development Report 2000. At national level, women share only 7.3 per cent of the members of House of Representatives, while it reaches 17.1 per cent in the House of Councillors (as of June 2000). At local level, though women's share increased to 19.7 per cent in special ward assemblies of Tokyo Metropolitan Government and 9.8 per cent in city assemblies, it is as low as 5.5 per cent in prefectural assemblies and 4.2 per cent in town and village assemblies (as of December 1999). Constituencies with urban population, such as special wards of Tokyo Metropolitan Government and cities, send more women to assemblies, since a large part of the population have no party affiliations, which are often based on profit-driven paternalistic connections in their communities rather than the public interest or a good cause, and innovative platform and policies addressed by female candidates are accepted with relative ease.

Similarly there are a few women in decision-making capacities in the national government. Percentage of women ministers was 5.9 per cent in 1996. At the local government level, however, the year 2000 has seen considerable progress, as the first female governor was elected in Osaka Prefecture in February, followed by the second female governor in Kumamoto Prefecture in April 2000. Besides these 2 governors, there were 3 female mayors, 2 town heads and 1 village head in office as of April 2000<sup>11</sup>.

Women government officials at high-ranking positions at the national and local level also remain very few as is shown in Table 8. While the over all figures on women's participation in government remain low, the constant improvement of women's representation at national advisory councils is exceptional. Women's percentage of national advisory councils has been steadily increasing and reached the then government target of 20 per cent in August 2000. The target was achieved with relative ease because members of such councils are appointees.

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<sup>11</sup> Prime Minister's Office, *White Paper on Gender Equality 2000*.

**Table 6: Female Representatives in National Diet 1950 - 2000**

	PARLIAMENTARIANS			Members of the House of Representatives			Members of the House of Councillors		
	Total no.	Female	Ratio of female members	Total no.	Female	Ratio of female members	Total no.	Female	Ratio of female members
<b>Nov. 1950</b>	749	24	3.4	499	12	2.7	250	12	4.8
<b>May., 1955</b>	716	23	3.2	466	8	1.7	250	15	6.0
<b>Sep., 1960</b>	698	24	3.4	451	11	2.4	247	13	5.3
<b>Dec., 1965</b>	704	24	3.4	454	7	1.5	250	17	6.8
<b>Jan., 1970</b>	733	21	2.9	486	8	1.7	247	13	5.6
<b>Oct., 1975</b>	726	25	3.4	475	7	1.5	251	18	7.2
<b>July., 1980</b>	762	26	3.4	511	9	1.8	251	17	6.8
<b>July., 1986</b>	763	29	3.8	512	7	1.4	251	22	8.8
<b>July,1992</b>	752	49	6.5	500	12	2.4	252	37	14.7
<b>Mar.,1996</b>	764	48	6.4	494	12	2.4	252	36	14.3
<b>Mar.,1997</b>	752	57	7.6	500	23	4.6	252	34	13.5
<b>Mar.,1998</b>	750	60	8.0	499	24	4.8	251	36	14.3
<b>Mar.,1999</b>	750	68	9.1	498	25	5.0	252	43	17.1
<b>June 2000</b>	731	78	10.7	480	35	7.3	251	43	17.1

**Table 7: Female Representatives in Local Assemblies (1976-1999)**

	Prefectural Assemblies			City Councils			Town and Village Assemblies			Special Ward Assemblies			Total		
	Total	Female member	Female Ratio	Total	Female member	Female Ratio	Total	Female member	Female Ratio	Total	Female member	Female Ratio	Total	Female member	Female Ratio
<b>Dec., 1976</b>	2807	35	1.2	20062	397	2.0	48010	232	0.5	1073	71	6.6	71952	735	1.0
<b>Feb., 1980</b>	2833	34	1.2	20080	441	2.2	47221	274	0.6	1073	73	6.8	71207	822	1.2
<b>Dec., 1985</b>	2857	38	1.3	19729	601	3.0	45293	390	0.9	1032	73	7.1	68911	1102	1.6
<b>Dec., 1989</b>	2844	75	2.6	19241	817	4.2	43113	579	1.3	1028	91	8.9	66226	1562	2.4
<b>Dec., 1992</b>	2896	82	2.8	19252	1111	5.8	42188	844	2.0	1024	121	11.8	65360	2158	3.3
<b>Dec., 1996</b>	2876	94	3.3	19071	1412	7.4	41306	1198	2.9	1007	145	14.4	64260	2849	4.4
<b>Dec., 1997</b>	2872	99	3.4	18965	1439	7.6	40977	1275	3.1	993	141	14.2	63807	2954	4.6
<b>Dec., 1998</b>	2837	99	3.5	18755	1491	7.9	40559	1339	3.3	989	141	14.3	63140	3070	4.9
<b>Dec., 1999</b>	2898	158	5.5	18550	1821	9.8	40076	1702	4.2	972	191	19.7	62496	3872	6.2

**Table 8: Women in government administration**

Year	Female Ratio among Top Four Levels of National Civil Service	Female Ratio in National Advisory Councils	Female Ratio among Managerial Positions of Prefecture Offices	Female Ratio among Managerial Positions of Specially Designated City Offices
1980		4.1		
1985	0.5	5.5		
1990	0.8	7.9	1.4*	1.7*
1995		13.1		
1999		19.8	3.4	2.9

\* 1991 figures.

Source: Prime Minister's Office, *Women's Situation and Programmes 1978, 1992, 1997*. Prime Minister's Office, *White Paper on Gender Equality 2000*.

## **2. WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN URBAN LOCAL GOVERNANCE**

### **2.1 Women's participation in urban local government**

#### **2.1.1 Legislation to promote women's participation in urban local government**

There is no specific legislation that promotes women's participation in urban local government in Japan, although article five of the Basic Law for a Gender-Equal Society (June 1999) stipulates the importance of women's equal participation in decision-making processes. Some individual local governments have taken action to encourage women's participation in political decision making, enacting local ordinances (April 2000) to promote gender equality in their local government areas.

A few special measures have been taken by both national and local governments. In March 2000, the National Personnel Authority organized an unprecedented seminar to encourage female students to apply for national government officer positions. The Authority has also occasionally encouraged Ministries to recruit and promote more women. Similar efforts to increase women's participation have been undertaken by several local governments. However, most local governments have not taken action to recruit women civil servants. This inaction may result from a sense of complacency, as the ratio of newly recruited female local civil servants is higher than that of new female recruits in the central government.

The ratio of female senior officers in local governments is slightly higher than that of female national government officers (1.1 per cent as of April 2000). The ratio of female managers at prefectures and specially designated cities in Japan as of April 2000 is as follows:

*Prefectures	Headquarters: 3.4%	Branches: 4.5%
*Specially designated cities	Headquarters: 2.9%	Branches: 5.9%

## 2.1.2 Limitations and constraints on women's participation in meetings and forums

Officially, there is no limit or constraint that prevents women from participating equally with men in formal and informal forums, meetings or other consultative mechanisms. In theory, women are free to voice their opinions and concerns about urban local government policies, programmes and projects. However, Japanese society retains a tradition of male decision makers, with this legacy most prevalent in rural areas. There is extremely poor representation of women in village and town assemblies. Almost 56.1 per cent of village and town assemblies and 10.1 per cent of city councils have no female members.

## 2.1.3 Women's voting rate

The following table indicates that women's voting rates are higher than that of men. The table also shows that the more urban the local government area, the lower the voting rates, regardless of voter's sex. Women's voting rates for both prefectural assembly members and governors have been higher than those of men since 1963. Women's voting rates for city/town/village assembly members and for mayors/village heads have been higher than men's since 1955 and 1959 respectively.

**Table 7: Voting rate at the 1999 Unified Election**

<b>Elections for the following categories</b>	<b>women</b>	<b>men</b>
Governors	58.25	55.23
Prefectural assembly members	58.08	55.21
Mayors of Specially Designated cities	60.33	58.75
Councilors of Specially Designated cities	52.60	48.70
Mayors of other cities	63.01	55.58
Councilors of other cities	62.92	58.45
Chief of Wards (in Mega cities)	49.91	45.05
Assembly Members of Wards	49.72	44.91
Town and Village Heads	84.21	80.92
Assembly members of Towns and Villages	83.82	80.33

Translated from the Gender Equality Office's URL:  
<http://www.sorifu.go.jp/danjyo/99statistics/2-1-1.html>

## 2.1.4 Organizations promoting women's participation in politics

The League of Women Voters of Japan was established by the late Senator Fusae Ichikawa and other feminists in 1945, when Japanese women obtained suffrage under the Japanese Constitution. The League has a membership of around 5,000, comprising 51 branches throughout Japan. The League has campaigned for raising consciousness of women voters, clean election campaigns, and monitoring policies on consumer issues and the environment. Similar activities have also been undertaken by the Ichikawa Fusae Memorial Association. Despite the strong goals of these organizations, they are relatively conservative in their approach. Their

membership largely comprises mature members and both have had difficulty in attracting young membership.

## 2.2 Gender sensitizing of urban local government

### 2.2.1 Gender training

According to a 1996 gender mainstreaming survey of 192 cities from the Tokyo and Osaka regions, 57.6 per cent of urban local governments<sup>12</sup> provided gender awareness and/or gender training courses to their staff. Another survey revealed that all of the twelve specially designated cities provided gender training or lectures. Twelve of the 47 prefectures did not provide any gender training or lectures on gender issues during the fiscal year 1998<sup>13</sup>. Those twelve prefectures are located in rural areas. Gender training was often a single session of an official staff training course for freshmen, medium-level managers, or managers. Participation in official training is usually compulsory. Other gender training included lectures on gender issues, where attendance was optional. It should be noted that the majority of civil servants in Japan are unlikely to attend such lectures unless they have designated responsibility for the issue.

The national government organizes lectures on gender issues for local government officers with designated responsibility for gender issues. These local government officers also participate in gender training courses and lectures on gender issues organized by women's centers, such as National Women's Education Centre, Tokyo Women's Plaza, Yokohama Women's Forum, Osaka Women's Centre and various NGOs.

As of June 1998, there were 815 women's centers throughout Japan<sup>14</sup>, most of which provide gender training or lectures on gender issues. Urban local government officers with designated gender equality responsibility participate in these courses and lectures. Trade unions of local government workers also provide gender training and lectures on gender issues.

### 2.2.2 Sex-disaggregated data for policy and/or programme formulation

Although statistical collection systems in Japan are relatively advanced, sex-disaggregated data is not always publicly available. While sex disaggregated data is usually collected, it is not necessarily cross-analyzed or released. After the 4<sup>th</sup> World Conference on Women, some collaboration between the Bureau of Statistics and the Gender Equality Office commenced. In 1996, the Economic Planning Agency and the Gender Equality Office developed a collaborative approach for the purposes of compiling an evaluation of unpaid work, which is primarily been done by women. This evaluation team was initiated by a female Vice Minister for the Economic Planning Agency, who attended the Beijing Conference.

National data on locally elected politicians is controlled by the Ministry of Home

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<sup>12</sup> Group Mikoshi 1996 *Report of the Study on Indicators for Gender Equality Policy* P.71

<sup>13</sup> Based on the author's survey which was conducted through *Current Situation of Gender Policies at Prefectures and Specially Designated Cities in Japan - Fiscal 1998*. Gender Equality Office 1999

<sup>14</sup> *Fujinn Dantai Meibo (Directory of Women's Organizations)* Edited and published by Ichikawa Fusae Memorial Association, 1999. This directory also provides a list of women's centers throughout Japan.

Affairs. The Ministry usually does not publish sex-disaggregated data. Organizations and researchers have to make special requests to the Ministry to obtain sex-disaggregated data. The Ichikawa Fusae Memorial Association collects data on female politicians but due to a limited budget, data on male politicians is not collected, making comparison impossible.

### **3. WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN URBAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

#### **3.1 Legal and political initiatives**

##### **3.1.1 Legal initiatives**

There is no law or regulation to provide a quota for women's representation in urban local government, except in advisory councils. Since the national government has set numerical targets for women's representation in national advisory councils, most local governments have also set numerical and time bound targets for women's representation in advisory councils, for example, 20 per cent by 2000. Such targets have not been enforced, but have been voluntarily implemented. In August 2000, the national government publicly announced that it had reached its target of 20 per cent female representation on national advisory councils.

##### **3.1.2 Political initiatives**

Women's organizations lobbied for all parties to undertake affirmative action initiatives for the national general election held in June 2000. The Democratic Party and the Socialist Democratic Party took initiatives to recruit female candidates. The ruling parties, including the Liberal Democratic Party, were not in favor of positive actions/measures to secure female candidates. They strongly maintain that "equal opportunity" is the best strategy for promoting gender equality, as affirmative action for female candidates is discrimination against male candidates. However, even the Liberal Democratic Party has specifically chosen women candidates on occasions when they have realized a woman candidate is likely to get stronger support, for example, in the election of the Osaka Prefecture Governor, after the former Governor was forced to resign due to campaigns against his sexual harassment by women's groups.

The Democratic Party has established a special fund for female candidates. The Party also worked hard to recruit female candidates for the 2000 General Election and will continue to recruit more female candidates for local assemblies. This initiative has been spearheaded by female members of the Party.

The sex ratio of the Socialist Party's seats in the House of Representatives is now fifty/fifty since the 2000 General Election. Furthermore, the Party's Chair and other important posts are occupied by female members. Ms Doi was chosen as Party Chairperson when the Party's popularity started to decline. Through her strong leadership, the Party aims to increase the number of female representatives, thereby, reviving the Party's popularity. Ms Doi became the first-ever female Speaker of the Japanese Parliament. The Socialist Party continues to strongly support female candidates.

The Japanese Communist Party has a long history of supporting female candidates, although the party is not in favor of implementing a quota system. Furthermore, female politicians of the Communist Party usually have a tendency to prioritise the Party's general policies and activities rather than prioritising women's

issues. For example, many local governments have a coalition of female assembly members, in which Communist Party women politicians often refuse to participate.

Political parties' encouragement of female candidates has increased the number of female politicians at both national and local levels. In 2000, women were elected as governors of two prefectures, for the first time in Japanese history. Furthermore, a rapid increase in the number of women in the House of Representatives and the House of Councilors, as well as local assemblies, indicates that the Parties' strategies to encourage female candidates, has produced some results.

The first female vice governor was appointed to the Tokyo Metropolitan Government in 1991. Since then, some governors of other prefectures have promised to consider recruiting female vice governors. As of 1 August 2000, women occupied vice governors' posts in seven prefectures. Two vice governors were recruited from within the same prefecture, while 5 vice governors were formerly senior officers in the national government. As of August 2000, there were only three women deputy mayors in Japan. Female vice governors have tended to demonstrate a far greater commitment to gender equality policy than their male counterparts, who demonstrate limited understanding of gender issues.

### **3.1.3 Resourcing and supporting women, to increase women's representation in local politics and government**

Since the late 1980s, the movement to increase women's representation in politics has been accelerated, although the strength of the movement has fluctuated. This movement could be called "Japanese women's silent revolution". The movement has successfully attacked the traditional rationale that "women are not politicians", which has prevented women from entering politics. The following women's organizations and groups have contributed to the change.

#### Ichikawa Fusae Memorial Association

In 1994, the Association started an annual training course for persons who intended to stand for the Unified Local Election of 1995. Thirty-six of the 93 participants in the first training course ran for the election. Twenty-four won. The training course was later modified and offered as two courses; one course for new women candidates and another course for incumbent assembly members, both women and men. Each course comprises around ten sessions, which are usually held during the weekend, so that participants from remote areas might have time to travel to and from the course location. The contents of the course for new candidates include information on the election campaign law and regulations, local politics and administration, and effective and low cost election campaigns.

The late Senator Fusae Ichikawa promoted transparency in politics, clean election campaigns, and low cost campaigns with minimal expenditure by candidates. The principle of the Ichikawa election campaign is that the candidate should be the person that most voters want to support. A campaign fund is built from small contributions from a large number of supporters, instead of (sometimes wealthy) candidates financing their own campaigns. Most election candidates who completed the course successfully practiced Ms Fusae Ichikawa's methods.

*Women's Perspective*, a monthly Japanese journal published by the Association since 1954, conveys substantive and up-to-date information on women in politics. Most female representatives and experts on women's issues subscribe to the journal. The journal has a circulation of 10,000 copies. The Association's library has one

of the most complete collections in Japan on women in politics and is widely used by researchers and activists.

#### Training courses for new female candidates

In 1996, in Osaka, the second largest city in Japan, a Back-up School (training course) to Send Women to Assemblies was established by two women who participated in the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995. Many women who completed the course were successful in the election for local assemblies that followed. Newspapers reported their success stories widely. Since then, nearly 20 prototypes of the course have been established throughout Japan. A great number of course participants became local councilors/assembly members at the 1999 Unified Local Election. The courses comprise 7 or 8 sessions on regulations and laws regarding election campaigns, how to campaign, presentations by incumbent female assembly members and local councilors on their experience, activities of local governments, and current key issues in local government.

Both the Democratic Party and the Socialist Democratic Party provide training courses for women in politics, focusing on women who intend to stand in upcoming elections. Female parliamentarians such as Senator Yoriko Madoka and Senator Mizuho Fukushima, who belong to the above parties, have also organized training courses to promote women's representation in politics.

#### Evaluation of training courses

The above training courses have been very effective in increasing the number of women in local politics and in 'cleaning up' local election campaigns. Furthermore, the courses have contributed to local politics becoming more accountable and transparent.

The Ichikawa Fusae Memorial Association's training course is substantively the most effective of all the training courses designed to promote women's representation in politics. Unfortunately, the course is provided only in Tokyo, so it is not easily accessible for people who live in remote areas. The Association has not been able to produce either manuals or a training kit for other women's groups due to their lack of human resources. This is most unfortunate, as the development of a manual/training kit would have a significant impact on the promotion of women's participation in politics Japan.

Other training courses are not regularly provided and the quality of the courses is not consistent. The limitations of other training courses include a lack of appropriate trainers, training materials and training schemes. Translated materials from other languages are often inappropriate due to the different social and political contexts for which they were written.

#### Other NGOs activities

NGOs have worked energetically, lobbying political parties to include women members and increase the number of female candidates for both national and local elections. Furthermore, in local elections, NGOs and women's groups have chosen and campaigned for their own candidates. Throughout Japan, women's groups called "Groups to Send More Women to the Local Assemblies" can be found.

A network called the "Campaign for Increasing Women in Politics" was formed to target the 1999 Unified Local Election. The core members of the network were Japanese participants from the Fourth Asia and Pacific Women in Politics Forum

held in Manila in Sept 1998<sup>15</sup>. The campaign primarily focused on decreasing the number of prefectures, cities, towns and villages where there were no female member of the respective local assemblies. The campaign made significant achievements. At least one woman was elected to each of the 10 prefectural assemblies which had had no female members. Unfortunately, three prefectures where there had been at least one female member of the assembly (not targeted during the campaign) lost their female member. The number of town and village assemblies without any female members was also significantly reduced.

An unusual feature of local government in Japan is the inclusion of consumer representatives. In the late 1970's, NGOs successfully lobbied for representatives from consumer groups to be included in metropolitan local governments. The movement spread to cover a large number of local governments. This representative movement aimed to provide an avenue for grass roots voices and perspectives. As the majority of consumer cooperative members are women, the majority of those representatives have been women. They have actively brought issues such as the environment, consumer issues, education, and social welfare, to their respective local assemblies and councils. The movement has faced two primary barriers to greater effectiveness. Firstly, representatives (elected from consumer group membership) usually have no prior political experience, and secondly, representatives are allowed only two terms.

The promotion of women to senior staff positions in urban local governments is not impressive. No local government in Japan has set any numerical target for women staff. However, most local governments in Japan have set both numerical and time bound targets for women's participation in advisory councils to the governments. To assist in achieving this target, most local governments have developed a list or database of female experts. A small number of local governments, with low participation by women, such as Hiroshima Prefecture, initiated women's capacity development courses to increase women's participation in politics. However, most local governments are not willing to organize training courses for women's participation in politics, as they are concerned they may be accused of discrimination against male politicians.

In 1997-99, the Ministry of Education funded a survey on gender mainstreaming in Japanese local governments. The survey, conducted by the author, found that only 24 (42 per cent) of 57 prefectures and specially designated cities had undertaken any specific strategies to increase the number of women in decision-making positions. Strategies varied, including "developing a plan of action on gender equality", "distributing relevant materials to the responsible officers", and "including gender issues and women's participation in decision making in the staff training courses."

Group Mikoshi's survey (1996) found only 16 (9.7 per cent) of 165 cities had guidelines and plans for female staff members' promotion, and 20 (12.1 per cent) were considering developing guidelines, while 129 (78.2 per cent) had neither guidelines nor future plans.

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<sup>15</sup> The network was established immediately following the Forum. The springboard for the campaign was a well attended and successful symposium held at Niigata Prefecture (where there was no female member of the Prefectural assembly). The author was a participant in the network. Female parliamentarians also cooperated in the campaign.

### **3.2 Training and support mechanisms for women in urban local government**

Many NGOs, women's groups and women's associations have taken initiatives aimed at increasing the number of women candidates for local elections, and educating and providing information to women voters. The following are major organizations, which have organized training programmes to increase women's participation in politics, and have developed policies and strategies to send women's representatives to local assemblies and councils.

#### **3.2.1 Associations of elected women**

Groups of female assembly members are frequently found in urban local assemblies. These groups have worked together with grass roots women's groups to promote gender equality in the respective areas.

The Alliance of Feminist Representatives (AFR) has approximately 240 members. It was established in 1992 by incumbent and former feminist local assembly members. The Alliance aims to increase female representatives in government, to ensure women have an active voice in the creation of society. The Alliance's activities include demanding an increase in the number of women who participate in politics, undertaking research on women in decision making, and publicizing their complaints on gender based discrimination. On a few occasions, women's summits have been organized in different regional locations to promote the exchange of information and ideas about increasing the number of women in public decision-making.

#### **3.2.2. Training and support organizations**

As stated earlier the Ichikawa Fusae Memorial Association promotes networking among women representatives and provides two annual training courses – one for incumbent local assembly members, the other for those who intend to stand in upcoming elections.

The Women's Solidarity Foundation (WSF) has established an Empowerment Grant to promote women's empowerment in the area of policy-making. The grants are awarded to individuals or groups, who are working to incorporate women's voices into policy formulation and decision-making processes. Priority is given to those groups that are endeavoring to increase the numbers of women candidates in local assemblies rather than national parliaments.

Women In New World, International Network (WIN WIN) was established in 1999 to provide financial support to women intending to stand for election. EMILY'S List in the USA is its prototype. Detailed information in Japanese is available from <http://www.winwinjp.org/> WIN WIN supported the election of the first female governor in Japan. In the June 2000 General Election, four female candidates were supported by the group and three were successful.

## **4. QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE EXPERIENCE OF WOMEN IN URBAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

### **4.1. Methodology**

As of 1 August 2000, there were five female local government leaders (two governors and three mayors), and 10 female deputy leaders (seven vice governors and three deputy mayors) in Japan. The survey targeted:

- Four leaders (governors and mayors)
- Five deputy leaders (vice governors and deputy mayors)
- Eleven city council/ward assembly members

The five local government leaders were prioritised as survey respondents. Unfortunately, Ms Uehara, the first female mayor of a local government area within the cities of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, was not able to complete the questionnaire due to extreme time constraints. Questionnaires were sent to two vice governors and three deputy mayors. One of those deputy mayors returned a completed questionnaire, but later refused to have the information published on the Internet. Another vice governor was added to the list of respondents. The other eleven women were chosen from urban local assemblies according to survey criteria which prioritised active female representatives without political party affiliations.

## **4.2. Age and background**

### **4.2.1 Heads of local governments**

Ms Kitamura, the first female mayor in Japan and a lawyer by profession, has been elected to the position of Mayor four times to hold the post for 12 years. Ms Higuchi was elected as Mayor two and a half years ago, while the two Governors were chosen in the year 2000.

Ms Kitamura, Mayor of Ashiha City, and Ms Shiotani, Governor of Kumamoto Prefecture, are in their 60s. Ms Ohta, Governor of Osaka Prefecture, and Ms Higuchi, Mayor of Hasuda City, are in their late 40s and mid 50s respectively. The two mayors stood for election with strong citizen support, while the two governors were chosen as candidates for the governor's election by the ruling Liberal Democratic Party. However, a coalition of over 30 women's groups was the core campaigner for Ms Shiotani's election.

Three of the four female heads of local government graduated from university. The mayor without tertiary education graduated from the most prestigious women's high school in her region, and joined the civil movement after having been a full-time housewife. Her grandfather and elder brother were local politicians. Only two of the four responded to the question on their income level. All were married and three have children, the number varying from two, to three to four. Ms Ohta, a former senior bureaucrat, has no child.

### **4.2.2 Local assembly members**

Eleven local assembly members have held their positions from 2-and-a-half years to 13 years. Two have held their positions for 9 years, and three for more than 10 years. All but one, do not currently belong to any political party. Their ages range from being in their 30s to their 60s, with a concentration of respondents being in their 40's. As of June 1999, the average age of city councilors in Japan was 51.4, while that of prefectural assembly members was 51.6. Therefore, the respondents of this survey are younger than the average age of prefectural assembly members.

Six received university level education, while four others completed junior college or similar level education. One, who has been a city councilor since she was 25 years old, completed high school. All except one, who is divorced, have husbands. Three have no children. Four have three children and one has five children. Three out of 11 have relatives who were politicians.

### 4.2.3 Vice governors and deputy mayors

While one each of the vice governors and deputy mayors were picked from the respective local governments, three others were chosen from senior bureaucratic positions in the national government. Recruiting vice governors and deputy mayors from senior national civil servants has been a common practice in Japan to promote networking and linkage between the local and national governments. Three are in their 50's and two are in their 60's. All five are university graduates.

Women are more likely to become politicians if they have relatives who were or are politicians. However, political inheritance is not as strong a requirement for local politicians as it is for parliamentarians of conservative parties of which one third have inherited their constituencies from their parents, grandfathers or other family members. Some parliamentarians of opposition parties have also become politicians through the same process.

### 4.3 Reasons for becoming politicians

Most elected representatives said they wanted to change local politics, particularly its dirty image and lack of grass roots representation. Ms Tomizawa stated she wants to include the principles of human rights of women and children in local government. In general, women representatives did not simply want to become politicians, but wanted to bring grass roots people's perspective into local government to make it more people oriented and closer to the community it serves. Most respondents believed that as women are more than half of their constituency, at least half local assembly members should be women. They also believe that changing local politics will lead to changes in society, and the creation of a new society with less gender based discrimination and greater flexibility in work and childcare.

A four times reelected city councilor responded that a friend almost forced her to run for election as one of the candidates of the then Socialist Party, which was looking for appropriate female candidates, 13 and a half years ago. Another city councilor decided to stand for election after observing the city council, and thinking she could do a better job herself. Both women have become active members of their government, for example, one is the vice chairperson of the Alliance of Feminist Representatives which aims to increase the number of feminist representatives in local government.

In conclusion, all respondents, with the exception of some who were appointed, wanted to become a politician to change present political policy and practice, and transform Japanese society. Becoming a politician was not their final purpose.

### 4.4 Routes to become a politician

The two Governors had been vice governor either immediately or one year before they were elected to the position of Governor. Before having become the vice governor, Ms Ohta, Governor of Osaka Prefecture, was a senior national government officer. Ms Shiotani was a social welfare worker. The two mayors had no overt political activities before being elected Mayor.

Two city councilors were re-elected four times, three members were re-elected three times, another three members were re-elected twice and one member was elected once. When re-elected, most had received more votes than in their previous election. The results manifest voters' satisfaction with their work as assembly member. Those with longer experience in city council hold posts as members or vice-chairs of 'hard' issue committees such as construction and city planning, usually

dominated by male members. "Hard" issue committees are generally considered more important than the "soft" issue committees of welfare, environment and education. Most female city councilors were committed to civil movements and social activities, however, one of the two first elected in her late 20's, had no direct experience of associating with civil movements, although her mother has been a committed member of such groups.

#### **4.5 Discrimination faced during the election**

All four heads of local government had perceived no discriminatory treatment during their election campaigns, although, two of the four responded that during their election campaign they received discriminatory comments and questions, for example, "what could a woman do as the governor/mayor?" According to the female mayor elected two years ago (as the third female mayor in Japan), she experienced similar comments from both men and women.

Four assembly members faced gender-based discrimination from their opponents during their election. This included mass dissemination of hand bills which contained slanderous information on the candidates. All five deputy leader appointees perceived no gender discrimination against their recruitment and promotion.

#### **4.6 Discrimination faced after entering local government**

One mayor reported being questioned on her ability to implement policies on, for example, "the expansion of subway construction" as it was suggested that the Ministry of Construction might not agree with her proposals because she was a female mayor. The other three heads of government did not perceive any gender based discrimination. The five deputy leaders also did not perceive any discrimination.

The five assembly members reported experiencing gender based discrimination at the assembly. This included sexual harassment; antagonism from male members about campaigns promoting gender equality and equality of children born to unmarried couples. In certain cases the city council chairman was uncomfortable and cautious in dealing with them. One of the councilors, Ms Nakata, has taken a sexual harassment case against her male colleagues to court. Another councilor, Ms Wakatake, has formally complained of maltreatment from female senior councilors, being the first city councilor to do so. The case has not yet been settled. Ms Yoshimoto has made a strong complaint of discrimination against her. She has been blocked from making statements, as she does not belong to any political party and is without the support of male colleagues.

Two respondents raised the issue of "gender role" pressures they had received from their family members. For example, one husband did not agree with the respondent's decision to run for election as he maintained that a wife should implement her roles as wife and mother before starting work outside the home. Ms Yoshimoto welcomed her neighbor's "ordinary" attitude towards her, suggesting they show a different attitude toward male political representatives.

#### **4.7 Obstacles to women entering politics and factors to overcome those obstacles**

##### **4.7.1. Obstacles**

All respondents, with two exceptions, recognized obstacles to women becoming politicians. The two exceptions stated that such obstacles had been removed in the last five years or so. Obstacles, which the elected female politicians mentioned, are

as follows:

- Strong stereotyped sex roles and norms of women in Japan's patriarchal society. Women are considered inappropriate as politicians, and consequently, insufficient trust is given to female politicians;
- Lack of adequate funds;
- The election system and a lack of awareness about the need to increase women's participation in politics; and
- Insufficient experience and training of women to become a politician.

Vice governors and deputy mayors that were appointed by male governors or mayors felt strongly that many governors and mayors did not want to appoint women as vice governors or deputy mayors. Hence, governors' and mayors' negative attitudes to appointing women could be a major obstacle to increasing the number of female vice governors and deputy mayors.

#### **4.7.2. Main factors to increase the number of women in politics**

Respondents raised the following as the strategies required to increase the number of women in local government:

- Increasing awareness of and commitment to human-rights, i.e. positive attitudes towards gender equality in local governments;
- Increasing women's empowerment, including economic independence;
- Encouraging women to run for elections and sit for examinations for promotion to senior officer positions;
- Facilitating citizen's education about politics and stereotyped sex role in society;
- Providing education to prospective political candidates on politics and gender equality;
- Providing funds to women to run for election; and
- Facilitating consciousness raising and developing a social system to enable equal sharing of family responsibilities between men and women.

The five appointees underlined the importance of increasing the number of female heads of local government and belief among senior officers that female political appointees are valuable.

#### **4.8 Gender difference in political concerns**

Two female heads of local government and one female city councilor said they perceived no gender difference in the political concerns of male and female local government members. All other respondents maintained there are differences in interests between male and female local government members. The survey suggests that usually women are more interested than men in the environment, childcare, education, and caring for aged persons. On the other hand, men were more interested in city planning, such as construction, maintenance and planning of water supply, sewerage, roads, and urban development. One respondent stressed that in her government, men had not shown any interest in any urban problems at all!

Regarding gender difference among local urban politicians, one city councilor stated that most men want to become politicians for their own interest, while female representatives have a tendency to tackle the issues in a straightforward manner but with too narrow a perspective.

#### **4.9 changes to be expected in the status of women resulting from the increase in female politicians**

All respondents with one exception (who said that she was not able to understand this question) expected changes in the status of women to result from the increased numbers of female politicians. One appointee stated with detailed examples that if a woman, appointed to a senior decision making position, could demonstrate her capability in her work, other women would be more likely to be promoted. However, another respondent cautioned that until women hold half of all seats, the situation would not greatly change.

The types of change anticipated by respondents are diverse, as follows:

- People will understand that men and women are equal.
- Ordinary issues, such as garbage disposal, education will be discussed at the local assembly.
- Money issues, such as budget, revenue, and expenses, will become transparent.
- The number of people who believe that women can do a better job in politics will increase.
- Society will demonstrate greater gender equality.
- Female bureaucrats will be encouraged by the example of female local government decision makers and will increasingly take career examinations.
- Expertise of female politicians in judgement and practical problem solving capability will lead to an increase in women's participation in decision-making throughout society.
- Gender equality policies and measures will be mainstreamed.
- Society will accept greater diversity of role models for women.

#### **4.10 Responsibilities of women leaders**

##### **4.10.1 Promoting women's participation in politics at all levels**

Ms Higuchi, the third female mayor in Japan, mentioned that people tend to say that if something goes wrong, it is because she was a female mayor. Male mayors did not receive comments blaming their lack of achievement or inadequacies on the fact that they were men. Ms Higuchi believes that by doing her best, she will demonstrate women's capacity for politics, which will lead to increased participation of women. Other comments on the responsibilities of women leaders included:

- Providing information, including government information, to the general public;
- Identifying and supporting potential female candidates;
- Consciousness raising and empowering of local women;

- Informing women about interesting aspect of politics;
- Consciousness raising about the need to increase the number of women politicians;
- Introducing a quota system for political party candidates;
- Lobbying the government to increase awareness of gender issues ;
- Advocating policies, which are easy for grass roots people to understand.

#### **4.10.2 Increasing the status of women in society**

The following activities for promoting the status of women were mentioned:

- Discussing the recruitment and promotion of female employees with company representative and supporting female entrepreneurs;
- Training women to participate in decision making processes;
- Campaigning to change male attitudes;
- Promoting the empowerment of women, particularly in relation to their economic independence;
- Reconstructing and improving social structures and childcare;
- Upgrading the capacity of women at decision making level and increasing their number.

#### **4.11 Activities as local women leaders**

All respondents recognised themselves as leaders at the local political level, with the exception of one city councilor who has been in the position for the shortest period. Policy makers such as female heads and deputy heads of local governments have changed and improved the gender equality policies of their respective local governments. Their activities have differed depending on their commitment to gender equality policies. Their actions have included:

- Formulation of a local ordinance on gender equality, increased number of women on advisory councils ;
- Providing more training to and promotion of female local government officers;
- Strengthening the offices responsible for gender equality policy;
- Approving usage of old surnames after legal marriage for both sexes;
- Consciousness raising on gender equality issues ;
- Supporting child care strategies, for example, the establishment of a Child Care Support Division and Family Support Centre.

Further activities are listed under Ms Higuchi's completed questionnaire, as she responded to these questions in detail.

Female local assembly members' achievements are as follows:

- The abolition of beauty contests;

- Proposals to conduct research on sexual harassment and domestic violence;
- An increase in the number of women members of various advisory councils ;
- The introduction of public recruitment of advisory council members;
- An improvement in female local government officers' working conditions, for example, the abolition of tea preparing customs necessary for female civil servants to enhance their chances of promotion;
- Various activities at the city council to promote gender equality;
- The establishment of a Gender Equality Division;
- Proposals to start overseas study tours for women;
- An invitation to Mrs Thatcher to address the national conference;
- A proposal to the board of education on gender equality education;
- The promotion of greater citizen's participation in politics (resulting in increased women's participation);
- Efforts to increase mayors' understanding of gender issues;
- The establishment of a group of female city councilors, which also meets with senior female local government officers.

#### **4.12 Activities to promote women's representation and participation in urban local government**

Women local government leaders' commitment to increase women's participation in local government was markedly different between the three groups; leaders, deputy leaders and local assembly members. Three of the four female heads of local governments did not initiate any strategies, while one mayor promoted more female officers to senior posts.

Four of the five deputy leaders initiated or took part in strategies to promote women's participation in urban local government. However, they did not participate in the activities to promote women's political representation in the urban local government. This was mainly due to the fact that the latter activity is too political for these vice governors and deputy mayors. The Japan's Civil Servant Law forbids civil servants' participation in political activities.

All female local assembly members except one, have engaged in strategies to increase the number of female representatives, for example: campaigning for election; supporting other female local assembly members in their campaigns; providing training; and establishing and operating the Alliance of Feminist Representatives.

#### **4.13 People's attitudes towards and perception of women in urban local government**

All respondents recognized that there had been an improvement in people's attitudes towards, and perception of, women in urban local government. Their comments included:

- People have greater trust in policies and administrations undertaken by female politicians who use their perspective as ordinary community members.
- People have started to consider that women's participation in urban local government is not unusual.
- People have started to assess and respect an individual's capability regardless of their gender, which has replaced traditional thinking based on stereotypical sex roles and opposition to women's participation in politics.
- People have recognized that ordinary women can achieve more satisfactory administration and politics than some men.
- There is less opposition to and singling out of women running for election. More women attend meetings and study groups on politics.
- Mass media has increased its dissemination of information on women's participation in politics.
- There is increased support for women candidates. One city councilor gained the support of men and neighbours at her second election, even though only women's groups supported her in her first election.
- Women find female vice governors and deputy mayors more reliable and trustworthy and also, there is a wider acceptance of women deputy mayors and vice governors.
- There is increased respect for women's thinking and ideas, which are based on their own life experience.
- There is increased support from male local government officers for their female superiors, particularly deputy mayors.

#### **4.14 Influence of their work and activities on the management of urban local government**

While some heads and deputy heads of local government acknowledged the influence of their work and activities on the management of their own local government, all except one local assembly members/councilors recognized their influence.

Three female heads of local governments acknowledged that their work had had some influence on the management of urban local government. Ms Kitamura stressed that it is difficult to evaluate her individual influence. Ms Higuchi stated that recently city officers' working style has become more people oriented, a practice which she promoted since she became mayor. Ms Shiotani was able to improve her local government's gender equality policy in the three-month period since her inauguration as governor. Ms Ohta has been promoting an information and communication technology policy for the administration system of the prefecture.

Two of the five deputy leaders recognized their influence on the administration of their respective local governments. Their influence included: development of gender equality policies; raising female government officer's motivation for promotion; popularizing urban local government policies; and gender mainstreaming

in various areas.

All local assembly members responded that they had been able to influence their own local government. This suggests that they are part of a driving force to reform local politics and administration. The following are some of their results:

- Establishing and/or upgrading gender equality offices;
- Transforming their city through citizen's participation;
- Reducing the retirement age of social welfare commissioners to allow younger commissioners to enter and change the work culture in this area;
- Educating mayors and increasing their awareness of gender issues;
- Subsidizing the installment of kitchen disposal processors;
- Reforming the decision making process of local politics by abolishing informal political decision making at bars and other drinking places.

#### **4.15 Difference in styles and approach compared to male counterparts**

Three of the four female heads of local government did not agree that there was any difference between their style and men's styles and approach, regarding political activities. Only Ms Higuchi stressed that her style greatly differed from her male counterparts and her predecessors. She had tried to reform the city administration and politics, to bring it closer to the people. She believes that people should be the "main actor" in urban local government.

Three of the five deputy leaders recognised that their styles differed from those of male counterparts. They identified stylistic differences as listening more closely to people's voices and having more respect for ordinary people's perspectives. One vice governor stated that she did not think that her style and approach differed from that of men. However, she had tried to utilise her perspective as a woman in her work.

All local assembly members, except one, considered that their styles were different from those of their male counterparts. Most of them did not attend or minimally participated in meetings held at drinking places like bars. Since important political issues are often discussed on such occasions, many female local assembly members/councilors have been trying to change this social custom.

Other different styles mentioned include:

- Taking initiatives to disclose administrative information (traditional male politicians tend to monopolize such information to retain their power);
- Facilitating opportunities for community representatives to submit petitions by making arrangements with government officers;
- Issuing regular newsletters to report on their activities and major issues in the assembly;
- Asking questions at the assembly whenever it necessary;
- Taking more time and money for conducting research, participating in meetings and other social activities instead of attending formal/informal meetings at drinking places;

- Educating male colleagues about gender issues.

One assembly member suggested that difference in politicians' approach and style could be caused by difference in moral faith and professional background rather than sex difference.

#### **4.16 Future plans and ambitions**

Three of the four leaders have similar plans that include reconstructing their respective local government economies, revitalizing the regions' economies, and reconstructing the damaged caused by earthquakes. Ms Higuchi plans to promote human rights issues and preservation of the natural environment.

Two vice governors and two deputy mayors stated their plans relate to covering gender and children's issues, social welfare, family issues and international relations. Future plans of assembly members and councilors are diverse as follows:

- Promoting strategies to increase female political representation to 50 per cent throughout Japan, in order to make local government more transparent and "clean;"
- Promoting locally relevant education on the environment;
- Assisting NGO activities for the aging population;
- Establishing systems to support female entrepreneurs;
- Overcoming the city's economic crisis by promoting women's economic independence (and consequent increase in the cities tax income);
- Accelerating the formulation of a gender equality ordinance; and
- Transforming politics in Japan so that voters develop a good image of politicians.

## **5. ANNOTATED LIST OF ORGANIZATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS**

### **5.1 Annotated list of organizations**

Name of the organization: Ichikawa Fusae Memorial Association

History and activities: The Association was established in 1946, one year after Japanese women obtained suffrage, by late Fusae Ichikawa who was a leader of women's suffrage movement as well as outstanding non-partisan senator for 25 years in her late life. The Association's motto is "women's suffrage is the key (for the nation) "

Activities of the Association provide more than 30 lectures and seminars(national and international) on politics and economics, including two training courses for would-be women candidates for local elections and incumbent local councilors/assembly members. The Association's library owns the most comprehensive historic collection on women in politics.

Address: 21-11, Yoyogi 2, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo 151-0053, Japan

Tel. 81-3-3370-0238, fax: 81-3-5388-4633

Contact person: Ms Kimiko Kubo, General Secretary

Name of the organization: WIN WIN (Women In New World, International Network)

History and activities: WIN WIN which is a prototype organization of Emily's List in the USA was established by six prominent Japanese women in 1999 in order to provide financial support to female candidates. WINWIN is a non-partisan organization and its membership includes both women and men. Recommended candidate(s) is/are selected by the steering committee. And the number of recommended candidate(s) is/are not fixed. At the time of election, members can select any candidate(s) from the list of the recommended candidate(s) to donate money for them. The recommended candidate(s) must be female. At the 2000 General Election, three out of the four WINWIN recommended candidates of the different political parties were elected.

Address: Palace Side Building No.6, Hitotsuhashi1-1-1, Chiyoda, Tokyo 100-8228, Japan, Tel: 81-3-5223-2248, Fax: 81-3-5223-2247 info@winwinjp.org. <http://www.winwinjp.org/>

Contact Person: Ms Yoko Harada

Name of the organization: the League of Women Voters,

Activities: Political education to raise voters' consciousness, Acting as a watch dog of parliament and local councils/assemblies and national and local government management.

Address:, c/o Women's Suffrage Centre, 2-21-11 Yoyogi, Shibuya, Tokyo 151-0053, Japan, tel: 81-3-3370-2727/5650, fax: 81-3-3370-4541

Contact Person:Ms Teiko KIDERA, President

Name of the organization :Women's Solidarity Foundation(WSF)

History and activities:Established in 1997 in the U.S., the Women's Solidarity Foundation aims to promote the political, economic and social empowerment of women. The WSF provides Empowerment Grants which are given to those groups that are endeavoring to increase the numbers of women candidates for local council elections with few women representatives in those councils/**assemblies**, particularly groups that are likely to achieve significant results through the use of this grant. The next grant year will be 2002.

Address:13-13 Koishikawa, Sound Bldg. 5F, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo 112-0002, Japan, Tel: 81-3-5805-0031, Fax: 81-3-5805-0030 E-mail [wsf@zb3.so-net.ne.jp](mailto:wsf@zb3.so-net.ne.jp) <http://www02.so-net.ne.jp/~wsf/level2/english.html>

Contact person: Tamako Nakanishi, President

Name of the organization: Beijing Japan Accountability Caucus

Purpose and activities: Established in 1995 after the 4<sup>th</sup> World Conference on Women held in Beijing to watch and lobby the Government implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action and undertake studies and research on the 12 critical areas of the Platform for Action,including women's participation in decision making.

Address: Villa Moderna B207, 3-18, Shibuya 1, Shibuya, Tokyo 150-0002, Japan,  
Tel/fax 81-3-3407-7922

Contact person: Dr Yasuko Yamashita, Representative

## **5.2 List of individuals**

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## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER ACTIONS

Local governments should undertake the following activities in collaboration with women's groups/organizations and other actors of the civil society.

### 6.1. Formulate local ordinances to promote gender equality in the society.

Saitama Prefecture started a research on and formulation of local ordinance on gender equality even before the national Government's announcement on the formulation of the Basic Law for a Gender Equal Society in Japan in early 1998. Tokyo Metropolitan Government followed to the effort of Saitama Prefecture. Other local governments started the formulation of local ordinances on gender equality after the promulgation of the Basic Law. Although the Basic Law stipulates the promotion of gender equality is the duty of local governments, the law does not provide further details. Therefore, the local ordinances on gender equality address to the policies, programmes and actions to advance the status of women in the respective local areas, such as increasing female member ratio at advisory councils, requesting companies to submit report to the local government on their practice to promote gender equality, providing the support to the battered women, support to working mothers with small children. Therefore it is essential for local governments in Japan to formulate such local ordinances to promote gender equality in the respective areas. Several women's groups have also formulated draft ordinance for the submission to the respective local governments.

### 6.2. Increase the number of qualified women in decision making processes in local governments by introducing quota systems

Government should introduce quota systems to increase the number of qualified feminist women members at the local advisory councils, as well as to increase the number of appointed qualified female decision makers in local governments.

### 6.3. Promoting gender training of decision makers and staff members of the local government at the local women centers and other facilities

Gender training has not been popular among staff training courses in Japan yet. Throughout Japan, there are over 800 women's centers. While some centers provide excellent programmes to increase gender sensitivity in the respective areas, others, in particular, centers with insufficient budget and staff members, have been unsuccessful in promoting gender equality in the respective society. Therefore, it is necessary for these women's centers to develop and provide effective gender training to decision makers in the area.

### 6.4. Developing methodologies to evaluate the impact of all policies and programmes undertaken by the local governments over women and men by gender sensitive perspective

The Gender Equality Bureau of the Cabinet Office of the Government of Japan<sup>16</sup> launched a research group, in November 1999, to develop a guideline to analyze the

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<sup>16</sup> The Bureau was upgraded from the Gender Equality Office under the Prime Minister's Office as of January 2001.

impact of all policies and programmes over women and men<sup>17</sup>. The project was completed and guidelines were publicly announced in November 2000. Local governments should develop their own indicators and guidelines by utilizing the national guidelines.

### **6.5. Promoting further cooperation and coordination with women's groups**

Such cooperation and coordination includes providing financial assistance to women's groups for undertaking various programmes to promote gender equality society.

### **6.6. Changing the operations of the local council/assemblies and renovating facilities of the local council/assembly buildings for the needs of female members**

The change includes no night session and no session during school vacation and provision of day care centers in the local council/assembly halls for councilors/assembly members with small children.

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<sup>17</sup> Hiroko Hashimoto was the member of the research group.