

# **Major Measures relating to the Madrid International Plan of Action on Aging 2002: Status of Implementation and Evaluation**

## **JAPAN**

### **Section 1**

#### **Fundamental Framework of Measures for an Aging Society**

##### **1. The Basic Law on Measures for an Aging Society**

The fundamental framework for measures to address the problems faced by Japan's aging society is derived from the Basic Law on Measures for an Aging Society (Law No.129, 1995).

The Basic Law aims to promote a comprehensive set of such measures, ensure the sound development of the national economy and society, and enhance the stability of people's lives. The fundamental objective is the creation of prosperous society with equitable and vibrant local communities that are characterized by a spirit of independence and solidarity.

In addition, the law stipulates that both central and local government are responsible for formulating measures that address the problems of an aging society in accordance with these fundamental goals and urges the people of Japan to make efforts to the same end.

The law also articulates a number of basic policies that should be formulated by the central government in this area, including on work and income, health and welfare, learning and social involvement, and the living environment.

It further stipulates that the government shall establish basic and comprehensive general principles to guide it in formulating measures to aging of Japanese society; submit a report annually to the National Diet concerning the state of society in this respect and the progress made in the implementation of the measures that have been adopted; and establish the Aging Society Policy Council as an auxiliary organ of the Cabinet Office.

The Aging Society Policy Council is headed by the Prime Minister and its members are all Cabinet ministers, who engage in deliberations on important issues related to the aging of society.

##### **2. General Principles Concerning Measures for an Aging Society**

The General Principles Concerning Measures for an Aging Society were compiled in fulfillment of the government's obligations under the Basic Law on Measures for an Aging Society. They represent the government's basic and comprehensive guidelines on measures to be taken in this area.

The first General Principles were compiled in July 1996. Five years later, in light of the changes that had occurred in the economy and society, and following the drawing up of a new draft by the Aging Society Policy Council, the current set of General Principles was approved by the Cabinet on 28 December 2001.

### **(Objectives in Formulating the General Principles)**

The current General Principles Concerning Measures for an Aging Society were formulated bearing in mind the fact that Japan is in the process of a transition to a full-fledged aging society, and with the aim of establishing an affluent and vibrant society with a pervasive spirit of solidarity, in which every citizen feels happy and proud to be able to live a long life. The principles state that in order to ensure the sound development of the economy and society and a steady improvement in people's living conditions, it is necessary to engage in the following actions, among others: to constantly revise the socio-economic system to ensure its suitability for the coming aging society; to support individual independence and roles of the family; and to support and increase the activities in which people engage, in addition to sustaining a secure lifestyle through an appropriate combination of self, mutual and public support.

### **(Basic Stance)**

The General Principles Concerning Measures for an Aging Society confirm the fundamental principles of the Basic Law and elucidate measures for enacting and implementing the stipulations contained in the law.

In addition, in order to realize these fundamental principles, the measures for an aging society are being promoted in line with a basic stance that can be described as realization of a system in which all members of society help and support each other. This can be achieved through active efforts by all stakeholders in society to fulfill their assigned roles, including central and local government, corporations, local communities, non-profit organizations (NPOs), families and individuals.

#### **(1) Revision of conventional stereotypes of older people**

Overall, older people today are active, healthy, and financially secure. Therefore, based on an awareness of the actual situation in which a diversity of living circumstances exist, policies are to be developed based on the diversity to be found among older people and free from conventional stereotypes of elderly persons as physically and financially frail.

#### **(2) Emphasis on prevention and preparation**

Support should be provided for citizens' self-help efforts to build up their financial assets, improve their health, engage in learning, and participate in social activities from a young age in order to prevent or prepare for problems that may occur when they grow old.

#### **(3) Activation of local community functions**

The required infrastructure should be set up to foster the proactive participation of elderly citizens in local communities and to activate community functions such as the provision of mutual support.

#### **(4) Gender equality perspective**

Policies should be developed from a gender equality perspective that consider the different situations of elderly men and women, and pay special attention to the situation of elderly women with regard to lifestyle, finance and health, as women's life expectancy exceeds that of men.

#### **(5) Practical technology in medical care, welfare, information and communications**

Infrastructure should be put in place to promote research and development and utilization of advanced technologies in the fields of medical care, welfare, information and communications, and to ensure their benefits are provided broadly to elderly people.

### **(Challenges Requiring a Cross-sectoral Approach)**

The General Principles Concerning Measures for an Aging Society also stipulate that in order to further advance such measures, the government must identify issues that require a cross-sectoral as well as a basic sector-specific policy framework as indicated below, and comprehensively promote related measures, keeping in mind that post-war baby boomers will be entering old age in a decade's time.

#### **(1) Support for independence in old age to make possible a range of lifestyles**

Given the growing number of active elderly citizens who seek to lead a range of lifestyles and given also the increase in the number of elderly persons living alone or requiring nursing care, measures that consider the needs of these people should be developed.

#### **(2) Revision of systems and practices that treat older people differently because of their age**

Measures limiting the participation in society of elderly people, such as mandatory retirement ages, should be changed. Also, regulations should be revised that give preferential treatment based solely on age.

In addition, active responses should be made to infringements of the human rights of elderly people.

Efforts should also be made to promote universal design.

#### **(3) Strengthening intergenerational solidarity**

Conditions should be created such that people are able to strengthen intergenerational solidarity in ways appropriate to their particular family structures.

In addition, in creating a balance between benefits and obligations within the social security system, the size of the contributions required should be set in a fair manner, based on ability to pay.

Furthermore, intergenerational interaction, as well as the joint participation of elderly and young people in a diverse range of social activities, including employment, is to be encouraged.

#### **(4) Promotion of participation in the local community**

Support should be provided for infrastructure that serves as a foundation for NPO activities, and efforts should be made to facilitate the start-up of local businesses with close ties to the local community.

In addition, efforts should be made to realize a barrier-free living environment, based on universal design concepts.

Furthermore, efforts should be made to promote lifelong local community participation for all citizens, including those of working age.

### **(Basic Measures by Sector)**

With regard to basic measures by sector, the General Principles Concerning Measures for an Aging Society provide policy guidelines in five specific sectors that are in accordance with the stipulations and concepts contained in Articles 9 through 13 of the Basic Law on Measures for an Aging Society. These five sectors are: Working and Income; Health and Welfare; Learning and Social Participation; Living Environment; and Promoting Research.

In "Work and Income," the general principles stipulate the following efforts: ensuring employment and work opportunities for older people; maximizing workers' abilities throughout their lives; stable operation of public pension systems; and support

for securing income for people in old age through self-help efforts.

In "Health and Welfare," the following efforts are stipulated: comprehensive health promotion; further implementation of the long-term care insurance system; enhancement of nursing care services; reform of the medical system for older people; and comprehensive promotion of measures supporting childcare.

In "Learning and Social Participation," the following efforts are stipulated: creation of a lifelong learning system; and promotion of social participation activities.

In "Living Environment," the following efforts are stipulated: ensuring stable and comfortable housing; comprehensive promotion of urban planning that utilizes universal design; ensuring traffic safety and protection from crime and disasters; and creation of living environments that offer comfort and vitality.

In "Promoting Research," the establishment of an infrastructure for the promotion of research is called for, in addition to efforts to promote all kinds of research that would contribute to solving challenges relating to the aging of society.

## **Section 2**

### **Status of Implementation of Measures**

As stated in Section 1, Japan formulated the General Principles Concerning Measures for an Aging Society in December 2001 as a set of fundamental and comprehensive guidelines for the government to follow. Based on the objectives for an aging society laid out in the General Principles, measures are being developed by sector, including “Work and Income,” “Health and Welfare,” “Learning and Social Participation,” and “Living Environment.” In Section 2, the status of implementation of these measures will be covered, with respect to the issues identified in the Madrid International Plan of Action on Aging in 2002.

#### **Priority Direction 1: Older People and Development**

##### **Issue 1: Active participation in society and development**

1. It is essential to make efforts to improve environmental conditions, so that the elderly can find a role in the community and participate actively in society in the expectation of finding fulfillment. For this purpose, subsidies are provided to Senior Citizens' Clubs engaged in a comprehensive range of social activities in local communities. The number of elderly people involved in such clubs stood at 8.04 million as of the end of March 2006, with membership spread over 130,000 different groups.

In addition, in order to promote elderly people's fulfillment and health, support is being provided for awareness-raising activities conducted by municipalities concerning the social participation of the elderly, as well as for volunteer activities for the elderly. Moreover, Japan has an annual National Welfare Festival that features a variety of activities, in areas such as sports, culture, health and welfare targeted at elderly people. The number of persons participating in National Welfare Festival events in fiscal year 2006 is estimated to have been as high as 8.38 million.

2. In order to encourage citizens to engage freely in activities that contribute to the health of their society, the Law to Promote Specified Nonprofit Activities (Law No. 7, 1998), which governs the certification and supervision of certain nonprofit organizations (NPOs), was enacted. In addition, surveys have been conducted of the status of civic activities. Moreover, a survey was conducted on the utilization of the Certified NPO System, which is intended to support the activities undertaken by NPOs, especially those which perform a significant public service, and also on related informational and awareness-raising activities.

##### **Issue 2: Work and the ageing labor force**

3. In order to secure equal employment opportunities for all, regardless of age, efforts have been made to ease or eliminate age restrictions on jobs advertised at Public Employment Security Offices, including issuing guidance and advice to employers advertising for employees.

As a result, the proportion of jobs advertised at the Public Employment Security Offices that made no age stipulations stood at 46.3% as of October 2006. These efforts have helped to expand employment opportunities for middle-aged and elderly job-seekers who in the past experienced an environment that was far less welcoming.

In addition, to contribute to further progress, a goal has been set to achieve a proportion of jobs advertised without age restrictions of more than 50% by the end of March 2008, and active efforts continue to be made to achieve it.

4. A Subsidy for Promoting Continued Employment has been provided for employers instituting a system which makes it possible for employees to continue working past normal age of retirement and those extending the continuous employment policy retirement age, and to employers of companies those workforces with over a fixed proportion of elderly workers. This subsidy has been successful in promoting what is referred to as the continuing employment system and fixing it in the public consciousness. (In fiscal year 2005 a total of 53,326 separate Subsidies for Promoting Continued Employment (Type I and Type II) were provided).

In response to the rapid ageing of the population and declining birthrate, the Law to Partially Amend the Law Concerning Stabilization of Employment of Older Persons (Law No. 103, 2004) was promulgated and came into effect in June 2004. Under its provisions, from April 2006, in order to make it possible to continue working at least up to the age when pensions start to be paid, employers are obliged to take measures to ensure employment through age 65 such as introducing the continuous employment system and extending the retirement age (known generally as measures to secure employment for the elderly). (The age for measures to secure employment for the elderly will be gradually raised to 65 by 2013 in conjunction with the extension of the age when pensions start to be paid for male workers).

As a result, as of June 1, 2006, of the companies with more than 51 employees that submitted a report on the employment status of the elderly in their companies, 84% had already implemented measures to secure employment for the elderly in accordance with the Law Concerning Stabilization of Employment of Older Persons.

In the public sector, too, efforts are being made to promote employment of elderly persons, on the basis of the utilization of the re-appointment system, which targets public servants of retirement age, making it possible for them to remain in their positions until the age of 65, either on a full-time or reduced working hour basis (The age limit on remaining at work is being gradually increased, in step with the increase in the age at which pensions start to be paid).

5. Towards the realization of a society that allows all people to work regardless of their age, since fiscal year 2004, the Japan Organization for Employment of the Elderly and Persons with Disabilities (JEED) has conducted the Age-Free Project, the purpose of which is to develop the infrastructure needed to create such a society. In carrying out the project, JEED has collected and analyzed exemplary practices in place in systems for assisting older workers with recruitment, employment, and adjustment to new offices. In addition, using the results of the analysis, JEED provides individual companies with consulting/support services and promotes public awareness and understanding.

In addition, at public employment security offices, when guidance is given to employers on increasing the retirement age or introducing the continuous employment system, an advisor on elderly employment issues who is posted at the Prefectural Association of Employment Development for Senior Citizens may be present or engage in follow-up consultations, if necessary. Through such efforts and other close cooperation between the prefectural Labor Bureau and the abovementioned association, guidance and support activities can be provided that are effective and efficient. In fiscal

year 2005 elderly employment advisors engaged in 33,254 consultations.

6. The 7th Basic Plan for Human Resources Development (Implementation period: 2001-2005) was formulated in May 2001, and has promoted the creation of infrastructure to ensure that the labor market functions properly and in a manner responsive to what in 2001 was recognized as a growing mismatch with vocational and job skills. In fiscal year 2005, based upon this Basic Plan, Career Development Promotion Grants were provided for the following activities: the operation of Career Development Support Corners by the prefectural centers of the Employment and Human Resources Development Organization of Japan; training of persons who engage in career counseling; and grants to employers who make efforts to support the career development of individual workers.

7. To help elderly people who wish to engage in temporary or short-term light work following their retirement, the Silver Human Resources Center Project promotes employment opportunities in local communities. As of the end of March 2006, the number of Silver Human Resources Centers stood at 1,544, with a total membership of around 770,000 persons.

In addition, by matching former company employees (known as “old boys” or “OB resources”) who wish to continue to utilize their knowledge and experience after retirement with small and medium enterprises (SMEs) that wish to utilize them as advisors, support is provided to improve the operational and technological capacity of SMEs. As of September 2006 there were a total of 5,685 persons registered as “OB resources” and matching had been implemented in a total of 2,477 cases.

8. The creation and development of new businesses is of great importance to ensure the vibrancy of the Japanese economy with respect to the creation of jobs and other positive functions. From this perspective, a financing system that provides preferential interest rates to elderly people and others (known as Loans for Women, Youth and Elderly Entrepreneurs) through the National Life Finance Corporation and Japan Finance Corporation for Small and Medium Enterprise is helping to create an environment that contributes to the creation and development of new businesses.

### **Issue 3: Rural development, migration and urbanization**

9. More than half of the working population in the agricultural sector is over the age of 65, and as this population in rural areas ages further, a significant drop is expected in the number of people working. In order to maintain and develop agriculture, therefore it is necessary to promote activities that utilize the experience and knowledge of the elderly.

To this end, based on the newly reformulated Basic Plan for Food, Agriculture and Rural Areas (approved by the Cabinet in March 2005), which itself is derived from the Basic Law on Food, Agriculture and Rural Areas (Law No. 106, 1999), support is provided to elderly people who seek to make a contribution to society with the knowledge and skills they have, assisting their younger counterparts engaged in agriculture or engaging in exchanges with urban areas. Moreover, in addition to efforts to manage and conserve local resources such as arable land and water used for agriculture, and to develop facilities designed to support elderly agricultural workers, efforts are being made to ensure that agricultural facilities in rural areas are barrier-free, thus making the living environment easier for the elderly to negotiate. Also, support is

being provided to agricultural cooperatives that are engaged in their own efforts to assist the elderly.

To date, the number of Elderly Action Groups (groups composed mainly of elderly persons who engage in such activities as the processing and sale of agricultural products; guidance for hands-on experience with agricultural work; passing on of rural traditions, culture and skills; and exchange activities with consumers) has risen from 6,081 (July 2002) to 6,135 (March 2006). It will continue to be necessary to promote such activities by elderly persons in the future.

#### **Issue 4: Access to knowledge, education and training**

10. In order to ensure that learning opportunities can be provided when there is a demand for them in the course of a lifetime, it is important for the government and municipalities, as well as private agencies and organizations, to form a collaborative relationship that promotes the advancement of life-long learning proactively and comprehensively. Various efforts have been made to realize a society that provides such learning, based on the Law for Improving Systems to Promote Measures for the Advancement of Life-long Learning (Law No. 71, 1990) and the reports by the Central Council for Education. In addition, life-long learning has been promoted through the provision of services that support the efforts of the private sector and municipalities to create better communities through the promotion of education, culture, and sports.

As a result of these efforts, in order to realize a structure that promotes lifelong learning in local governments, as of June 2006, Departments of Life-long Learning had been established in almost all prefectures. In addition, a Prefectural Lifelong Learning Council, which is the body mandated to examine and deliberate important measures concerning the overall promotion of lifelong learning, has been established in 36 prefectures. 44 prefectures and approximately 1,024 municipalities have formulated a basic concept of how to promote lifelong learning, as well as a mid- to long-term plan for doing so.

In addition, a "Survey on Lifelong Learning" implemented in 2005 by the Cabinet Office shows that, of the respondents who indicated that they had engaged in lifelong learning pursuits (either as a hobby or for educational purposes) over the past year or so, the proportion of those engaging in such pursuits in the 60-69 year bracket was 49.5%, and for those 70 years and above the proportion was 40.2%. Both of these figures represent an increase from the results of a previous survey in 1999, when the proportions for those engaging in lifelong learning were 45.1% for 60-69 year-olds, and 32.7% for those 70 years and older.

11. The National Lifelong Learning Festival is held with a view to promoting and raising awareness of life-long learning, and includes a symposium and experiential workshops. Through the festival, opportunities are provided on a nationwide scale for the general public to participate in related activities. From October 5 to 9, 2006, a festival with the theme "A first step to lighting up your future through learning" was held in Ibaraki Prefecture.

12. Many learning opportunities are provided for a wide range of age groups in civic public halls, libraries, museums, women's centers, and other social education facilities, as well as at the offices of the Boards of Education. Among these programs are classes

or courses designed to enhance understanding of aging societies or created for the elderly themselves. In fiscal year 2004 a total of 42,844 classes for elderly people took place in civic halls, and 14,512 classes were held at the offices of Boards of Education.

**Issue 5: Intergenerational solidarity; and**

**Issue 7: Income security, social protection / social security and poverty prevention**

13. Japan's public pension system is based on the concept of intergenerational support, whereby the pension benefits received by the elderly derive from the insurance payments made by those who are working, including office workers and the self-employed. Pension benefits constitute 70% of household income for elderly people, and, as one in four people in Japan receive a pension, the pension system can be seen as essential to lives.

In order to gain a consensus from the public, especially from the younger generation, concerning the basic structure and importance of the public pension system, informational activities are held throughout the country, for example, during Pension Month (November). Additionally, in order to improve the rate of payment of National Pension contributions, the government has made it possible for payments to be made at convenience stores and through Internet banking; it has formulated an action plan containing annual targets; and has steadily pressed those who are in arrears to make payment.

14. In order to establish a sustainable and dependable pension program in an environment in which the population of aging persons is increasing and the birthrate is declining at an accelerating rate, and also to ensure inter- and intra-generational fairness, mindful of the need to avoid imposing an excessive burden on workers of the future, the Japanese Diet adopted the Law to Partially Amend the National Pension Law, which came into force in June 2004. The Law is intended to: 1) keep increases in pension contribution rates to a minimum and establish an upper limit on premiums; 2) increase the ratio of national subsidies to total basic pensions; 3) make use of reserve funds; and 4) adjust the rate of benefits (growth in pension benefits) so that they remain within the range of pension premium rates, thereby preventing an endless cycle of reductions in benefits.

15. With regard to the corporate pension system, which supplements the public system, under the Law to Partially Amend the National Pension Law (Law No. 104, 2004), the following amendments were adopted in order to stabilize and enhance corporate pension plans: 1) a freeze on the exempted contribution rate of the Employees' Pension Fund was lifted; 2) conditions for the defined contribution pension plan were eased, as was the requirement for withdrawing funds before the maturity of the plan; and 3) the method of calculating total personal pension contributions, related to different corporate pension plans of the defined-benefit type.

16. In 2002, the Long-term Life Support Fund Loan System was established by the Prefectural Council of Social Welfare. This system allows low-income elderly households wishing to continue living in their own homes to take out loans for living expenses by mortgaging the house and the land on which the house is located.

As of the end of September 2006, 46 prefectures had already embraced this system

for issuing loan permits for 467 households.

As the number of prefectures implementing the system has increased, so too has the number of loans issued, and the government will continue to make efforts to promote and disseminate this system.

### **Issue 8: Emergency situations**

17. The Basic Disaster Management Plan (amended by the Central Disaster Management Council in July 2005) stipulates that measures should be adopted that take into account in disaster planning those who would require assistance, including the elderly. Countermeasures have accordingly been implemented in a prioritized manner, including work to protect hospitals and residential homes for the elderly from disasters such as landslides. In addition, efforts have been made to prevent disasters in areas with a high percentage of elderly that have suffered in the past from severe flood damage or landslides.

In addition, in order to promote measures to support the evacuation of people requiring assistance during disasters, including the elderly, a study group comprised of experts was launched. This group has been looking into matters such as the menus of support that would be required in evacuation centers, and collaboration among related organizations, including doctors, nurses and also those responsible for the nursing care insurance system, in order to formulate measures to be taken by municipalities. In 2005, the Guidelines to support the Evacuation of People Requiring Assistance During a Disaster were revised to incorporate the conclusions of the study group.

## **Priority direction 2: Improving the Health and Welfare of Older Persons**

### **Issue 1: Health promotion and well-being throughout life; and**

### **Issue 2: Universal and equal access to health-care services**

18. In order for people to be able to live healthy lives when they grow old, it is important that comprehensive efforts be made to ensure that they are healthy from at least their forties. The main implementing body for such efforts is the municipality, and based on the Law for Health and Medical Services for the Elderly (Law No. 80, 1982), a comprehensive range of health-related projects are being steadily implemented, targeting people 40 years of age and older. These efforts include health education, check-ups, training to enhance skills, and home visits and guidance.

In addition, from 2000, in order to promote lifelong health, the "21st Century National Health Plan (Healthy Japan 21)" (Implementation period: 2000-2010), containing 70 specific measures in nine areas, has been promoted. The Health Promotion Law (Law No. 103, 2002) was enacted in 2002 as a means of enhancing health and preventing illness among the people of Japan based on "Healthy Japan 21." This law was enacted in May 2003.

In May 2004, the government announced the Health Frontier Strategy for promoting measures to combat lifestyle-related diseases and prevent the need for nursing care. Its basic objective was to further extend healthy life expectancy (the period of a person's life during which he/she is able to live independently in good health), and measures will be implemented on a ten-year basis under the strategy, beginning in 2005.

19. In March 2006 the Basic Plan for the Promotion of Food Education was approved. The plan derives from the Basic Food Education Law (Law No. 63, 2005), which aims to promote measures for food education in a comprehensive and systematic way so that the people of Japan can develop healthy minds and bodies and live vibrant lives. The plan is to be implemented over a five-year period from 2006 to 2010, and stipulates the basic measures to be taken in order to promote food education in a comprehensive and systematic manner.

A variety of efforts are being implemented in order to promote food education, based on the “Promotion of Dietary Guidance” (approved by the Cabinet in March 2000) so as to realize among the people of Japan eating habits that contribute to good health. As one effort to disseminate dietary guidelines and make them common knowledge, in June 2006, the “Japanese Food Guide Spinning Top,” which provides easy-to-understand instructions on what to eat and in what quantities, was created. In addition, work is being done by nutritionists, and awareness-raising measures are being implemented by community volunteers to promote good eating habits. The food industry, including retailers and restaurants, is also being encouraged to utilize the Food Guide.

20. In order to realize an elderly society in which people enjoy a high quality of life, in comfort and peace of mind, reduce the length of time that elderly people require long-term care, and extend “healthy life expectancy,” efforts are being made to develop advanced medical and assistive devices that support healthy and active participation in the activities of society by elderly people.

With respect to medical devices, efforts are being made to develop technologies such as one that will substitute for, or restore functions of the body.

Efforts are also being made to develop useful assistive devices. Devices already developed are sometimes presented to the public in exhibitions so that their existence and the way they work will be better understood.

#### **Issue 4: Training of care providers and health professionals**

21. In order to improve the competence of care managers playing a major role in the operation of the Long-term Care Insurance System, internship programs and training programs for existing staff are conducted in a systematic manner. Additionally, in order to improve local care management, measures have been taken to strengthen the support system for care managers, including the establishment and development of Regional Comprehensive Support Centers, which offer instruction and advice and maintain coordination with other related organizations.

(Through the end of fiscal year 2005, the total number of persons who had passed the examination given at the end of internship programs for care managers stood at 372,509. As of the end of fiscal year 2004, the cumulative number for existing staff having completed care manager training programs stood at 396,933 persons. As of the end of April 2006, there were a total of 3,436 Regional Comprehensive Support Centers around the country.)

### **Priority direction 3: Securing the environment to enable an active and supportive life**

#### **Issue 1: Housing and the living environment**

22. Under the Eighth House-building Five-year Plan (approved by the Cabinet in March 2001; implementation period: fiscal year 2001-2005), the following efforts have been made to secure high-quality residences on a stable basis: residences have been provided that precisely reflect the diversified needs of the elderly and others and allow residents suffering from limited physical functions or disabilities to continue to live there; collaboration with medical, health, and welfare policies has been strengthened through measures such as the promotion of social welfare facilities constructed jointly with nursing homes for the elderly; and living environments have been improved

The following are examples of specific measures that have been taken:

- For newly developed public housing projects and residential sites provided for rent by the Urban Renaissance Agency, barrier-free environments are now standard. For existing facilities and residential complexes, efforts are underway to promote the transformation to barrier-free environments.  
In addition, elderly people who live alone are now permitted to move into public housing; there are discretionary efforts by local governments to ease income limits on those applying for such housing; and a variety of efforts are being made to prioritize housing for the elderly -- all to help secure living environments for older citizens.
- When large-scale housing projects are rebuilt, efforts are now made, with the cooperation of local social welfare authorities, to an office to provide social and welfare services and provide a Life Support Advisor. As of the end of fiscal year 2005 there were 21,260 public housing units that benefited from such facilities (in fiscal year 2004 the figure was 20,143), and in conjunction with the implementation of welfare policies, progress is being made.  
In addition, efforts are being promoted to supply high-quality rented accommodations that have been designed and constructed to respond to the needs of those with diminished physical functions, including barrier-free accommodations for elderly persons (handles and rails to aid mobility, wide corridors, no steps, etc.). As of the end of fiscal year 2005 a cumulative total of 23,045 such public housing units had been provided.
- At the Government Housing Loan Corporation, additional funding is available for housing that responds to the needs of elderly people, and to make them more secure, a scheme has been established that offers preferential interest for houses of especially high quality design in terms of the access they provide to the elderly and handicapped
- A structure has thus been developed to provide the rented accommodations that elderly people require, through a system of registration and monitoring in which applications from the elderly are not rejected, and in which elderly people are given assistance making the move into such facilities.

In the future in accordance with the Basic Program for Housing that was approved by the Cabinet in September 2006, housing policies will be developed that promote measures dealing with the aging society, including the stable securing of housing for elderly persons.

23. In accordance with the Law for Promoting Barrier-free Transport for the Elderly and the Physically Disabled (Transportation Accessibility Improvement Law) (Law No. 68, 2000), the Basic Policy for Promoting Transportation Accessibility (Public Notice No. 1 of the National Public Safety Commission, Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Construction and Ministry of Home Affairs, 2000) was formulated, laying out the goals for barrier-free environments, measures that transportation companies must take, and guidelines for the Basic Plans.

Based on these laws, in order to promote transportation accessibility for the elderly, a number of measures have been promoted to develop facilities that can be used easily by the elderly, for example, improving public transportation terminals such as stations and airports by introducing non-step buses.

- With regard to stipulations on the removal of steps at passenger facilities used by an average of 5,000 people or more each day, as of fiscal year 2005 the implementation of barrier-free facilities at railroad stations stood at 56.3% (figure for the end of fiscal year 2000: 28.6%). Concerning blocks for guidance of the visually impaired, as of fiscal year 2005 these had been installed in 83.3% of all stations used by an average of 5,000 people or more each day (figure for fiscal year 2000: 57.7%). Gradual progress is thus being made.

In addition, with regard to the removal of steps at bus terminals, passenger ship terminals and airports, as of fiscal year 2005 the figures were as follows: bus terminals 75% (2000: 59.5%), passenger ship terminals 71.4% (2000: 33.3%), and airports 43.5% (2000: 0%). Elevators, escalators, and ramps have already been used by an average of 5,000 people or more each day.

The figures for blocks for guidance of the visually impaired stood as follows in fiscal year 2005: bus terminals 54.5% (2000: 47.6%), passenger ship terminals 57.1% (2000: 33.3%), and airports 87.0% (2000: 22.7%)

Although from the perspective of management, factors for instability still exist, such as reductions in passenger numbers, progress can be seen in the development of barrier-free environments in passenger facilities.

- With regard to low-floor and non-step buses, the proportion of low-floor to all buses in fiscal year 2005 stood at 28.1% (2000: 4.9%) and non-step buses at 15.0% (2000: 2.2%). Even in an environment in which reductions in passenger numbers mean that bus companies are concerned about falling revenues and lower profits over the long term, the level of investment in barrier-free environments is holding steady.

- As of the end of fiscal year 2005 there were a total of 9,699 taxis for the disabled in operation. Even in the environment mentioned above, in this area as well investment in barrier-free environments is still holding steady.

- In terms of ease of access to railroad vehicles, passenger ships and airplanes, the figures for barrier-free access to these modes of transport were 32.1% for trains (2000: 10.2%), 8.0% for ships (2000: 0.0%) and 47.0% for airplanes (2000: 0.7%).

Investment in barrier-free railroad vehicles is holding steady, and it is projected that the figure for accessible railroad vehicles will continue to rise.

With regards to airplanes, too, there is consistent growth in the proportion that are easy to access, and it is projected that this figure will continue to increase

as alternatives to airplane travel proliferate, as airline companies continue to be called on to make their planes barrier-free and as a support system comes to be utilized

With regard to passenger ships, because of the downturn in business due to the stagnant economy in recent years, and also because of the downturn in new construction or refitting of ships due to the cost burdens imposed by higher oil prices, the figure for barrier-free ships remains at a low level. In the future, as the refitting of ships more than 15 years old continues, it is projected that this figure will continue to rise towards the target originally set, as shipping companies too, continue to be called on to create barrier-free environments and a support system comes to be utilized.

24. In accordance with the Act on Making Buildings Accessible and Usable for the Elderly and Physically Disabled (Heart Building Law) (Law No. 44, 1994), in order to promote the construction of buildings that allow the elderly and others to use them in more easily, building owners have been asked to conform with certain criteria for new construction, extensions, or reconstruction of approved buildings visited or used by the general public or elderly people.

Of the total stock of certain specified buildings in Japan with a floor area of more than 2,000 sq.m., in fiscal year 2002 not even 30% of such buildings met these basic criteria. With the amendment of the Heart Building Law adopted in July 2002, however, it became mandatory that specified special buildings with a floor area over 2,000 sq.m. to conform. As a result, in fiscal year 2002, the rate of conformity reached 34%, and in fiscal year 2005 all such buildings achieved conformity, as a consequence of the adoption of measures to implement the amendment. This is an example of the steady progress that can be made towards making buildings used by the general public barrier-free.

25. In order to promote a barrier-free society in an integrated and comprehensive manner, with barrier-free public transport, buildings and certain specified areas between transportation facilities and buildings, the Transportation Accessibility Improvement Law and the Heart Building Law were integrated in June 2006 as the Law on Promoting Barrier-free Transport and Facilities for the Elderly and the Disabled, (entered into force on December 20, 2006), and the scope of the consolidated legislation expanded.

26. Based on the Seventh Fundamental Traffic Safety Program (approved by the Central Traffic Safety Policy Council in March 2001, implementation period: 2001-2005) a variety of traffic safety measures were promoted in local communities, homes and schools and other locations, with priority going to the following three types: (1) traffic safety measures for elderly pedestrians and cyclists; (2) traffic safety measures for elderly drivers; and (3) traffic safety campaigns and programs to provide greater protection to seniors in which citizens are involved. Measures include the development of a universal-design-based road traffic environment; protection of pedestrians through vehicle safety measures; thorough implementation of participation, experience and practice-based traffic safety education and awareness campaigns using actual accident data; enhancement of courses for elderly drivers; measures to reach out to and promote awareness among younger drivers; and further improvement of the "Silver Leader" program for safety instructors. In addition, in March 2006, the Central Traffic Safety

Policy Council approved the Eighth Fundamental Traffic Safety Program (implementation period: 2006-2010).

## **Issue 2: Care and support for caregivers**

27. Based on the status of implementation of the Long-term Care Insurance Plan in local governments, in accordance with the Five-Year Elderly Health and Welfare Promotion Strategy (Gold Plan 21) (implementation period: 2000-2004), systematic improvements have been made to ensure a high-quality care service infrastructure that responds to the needs of elderly persons who require care. Efforts have included the training of human resources who will provide home-based services, such as home helpers, and the development of nursing care-related facilities such as special nursing homes.

In addition, the Law for Partial Amendment of the Long-Term Care Insurance Law (Law No. 77, 2005) was enacted in June 2005. The law includes a range of measures to effect a shift in the existing nursing care system to make it prevention-oriented, a review of the accommodation and meal fees paid by nursing home residents, the establishment of a new service system, and improvement of care service quality.

28. Fiscal year 2005 was designated as the “the One-Year Campaign to Learn About Dementia.” During the year, a PR campaign was implemented with the aim of increasing understanding about dementia and support and assistance for those who suffer from it. Its goal was to encourage residents and citizens to think for themselves about the importance of building a community in which the dignity of persons with dementia is upheld and in which such persons could continue to live. Specifically, the following actions were implemented: (1) study meetings for residents, corporations and schools, to raise understanding about dementia; (2) efforts to compile care plans for people directly involved in caring for people with dementia; and (3) compiling successful case studies and PR on community-building.

In addition, support is being provided for projects dealing with dementia that are implemented by prefectures and designated cities with the goal of producing specialists in nursing care for dementia patients, including establishing programs to train caregivers and those who work in a senior and guiding capacity in elderly care. In this way the quality of nursing care services for elderly patients with dementia is being improved (from fiscal years 2001 to 2005 the total number of persons receiving training was 75,739). Furthermore, in order to diagnose dementia in its early stages and respond quickly, support is being provided to projects implemented by prefectures and designated cities to nurture medical support specialists for dementia patients, who will provide training on diagnosis and examination technologies to other doctors and provide advice.

29. It has been mandatory since fiscal year 2002 that the services provided by group homes for elderly people with dementia be evaluated and support for the creation of an evaluation structure has been provided in each prefecture of Japan. Efforts will continue to be made to improve the quality of care for people with dementia in the future.

Also, to improve the quality of care at group homes, training programs have been conducted for people who intend to open new facilities. Beginning April 2006, all businesses or persons (and their representatives) seeking to open group homes have been required to undergo compulsory training.

**Issue 3: Neglect, abuse and violence**

30. As part of the reform of the long-term care insurance system in 2005, a variety of measures have been implemented to promote a structure through which it is possible to grasp the actual condition of elderly people who require assistance; protect the rights of the elderly in cases of abuse; and facilitate the operation of services that provide general advice in response to inquiries. Beginning April 2006, Regional Comprehensive Support Centers have been established to provide such services. (As of the end of April 2006 there were a total of 3,436 such centers around the country.)

In addition, the Elder Abuse Prevention and Caregiver Support Law, enacted in 2005, stipulates that efforts to prevent abuse of the elderly and provide support for those who provide care to them should be undertaken mainly by prefectural or municipal authorities (Municipal authorities are directed to provide advice, guidance and consultation and carry out onsite checks on the elderly and care providers; prefectural authorities are directed to coordinate their work in this area with their municipal counterparts). Efforts are made through the formulation of guidelines and policies to ensure that such work is smoothly implemented by local governments.

Furthermore, under the provisions of the abovementioned law, in addition to analyzing actual cases of abuse of elderly persons, surveys and research are used to craft appropriate methods of responding to cases of abuse, appropriate methods of caring for elderly persons, and support for the prevention of abuse, protection for victims of abuse and assistance for care providers.

**Issue 4: Images of aging**

31. The National Meeting to Consider a Warm-hearted and Long-lived Society is an event that is held annually. Events such as this one provide an opportunity to reach out broadly to those who have already reached old age, or those who are about to enter old age, and introduce various ways of living as an elderly person in an aging society. These meetings provide information on good practices in this regard (in other words, living a free and vibrant life while shouldering responsibilities and exercising their abilities, regardless of age), or on how to participate actively in community activities or perform work as part of a group.