Local Community Volunteer Social Worker System In Japan: Survey Data Analysis And Feedback To Community

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A Minsei-lin is a social work volunteer, usually translated to English as “a person or persons commissioned to promote and stabilize the lives of people” (Goodman 1998:143). The Minsei-lin system is the main form of a direct social welfare provision that depends on the volunteer system in Japan. The Minsei-lin system can be traced back to the volunteer organization called the Homen-lin system during the prewar period in Japan. Homen-lin is similar to the German welfare system, called the Elberfeld programme, or the Friendly Visitors of the Charity Society in London. However, membership of the Homen-lin used to be male-dominated, largely comprised of teachers, policemen, chemists, and rice dealers. Unlike the volunteers or the charity work carried out in the Western society, the Homen-lin’s work included advising individuals on how to improve the management of their household budgets rather than relying on the state. The role of Homen-lin evolved over the next two decades and spread throughout Japan. In 1938, the Homen-lin was refined through social legislation. However, the role of the Homen-lin became increasingly intertwined with the aim of ensuring full cooperation in the war effort until the end of World War II. In the postwar period, the Homen-lin was renamed the Minsei-lin; however, its role as the provider of welfare remained. The Minsei-lin are appointed to renewable three-year contracts, on the condition that they live in their designated area “for a long time” and that they have a clear understanding of the area’s social situation and show the enthusiasm for carrying out the promotion of social welfare. The Minsei-lins are appointed by each municipality according to the law of public welfare; the Minister of Health, Labor, and Welfare entrusts to them their role of supporting the social welfare as Minsei-lin. The Minsei-lin system offers an example or model of the Japanese concept of community care. Basically, welfare services in Japan put strong emphasis on self-help and self reliance; the role of family is central. However, in some cases where families have not coped well with their problems, members or leaders of the Neighborhood Association and the Minsei-lin voluntarily provide adequate support in everyday life. Some western researchers have pointed out the contrast between the Minsei-lin and many professional social workers in other industrialized countries, who live outside the communities in which they work and visit them during the day. However, the Minsei-lin deal with the lives and problems of those in their neighborhoods, because they reside in the same community (Ben-Ari 1991, Goodman 1998). The Japanese family has been steadily transforming in recent years, from that of the nuclear family to a single household, and consequently people have been deprived of the opportunity to receive care and have lost the capacity for self-help. Moreover, there is a
growing number of elderly people living alone in both the city and the countryside. The demand for Minsei-lin welfare services has accordingly increased. Meanwhile, there are insufficient Minsei-lin in some places, or the Minsei-lin themselves have been aging. As a result, adequate welfare services are not being provided. In addition, there is an increasing number of foreign residents who have lived in Japan for several years as local residents. The Minsei-lin cannot provide adequate information and services for the country’s growing multinational population.

We have conducted a survey of all the members of Minsei-lin in Kyoto City (2720), Uji City (305) and Yawata City (149) from August to September in 2012 using a structured questionnaire. The rate of data collection was close to 90%. This kind of survey of all the members of Minsei-lin was our main challenge in order to get detailed information on their working condition.

In this report, we will analyze the data obtained through the survey by using various statistical methods: Multiple Regression Analysis, GIS Analysis and Correspondence Analysis in order to find ways of overcoming the aging problem society with the help of the Voluntary Sector.

Reference