

# Emerging New Volunteerism among Japanese

高齢社会日本のボランティア活動の現状と課題



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# Japanese Volunteers

- A traditional Japanese community involved many types of volunteer work.
- Such volunteer work was mutual and reciprocal within the community.
- However, such practices vanished over the course of the rapid industrialization of the 1960-70s.



# New Volunteers

- People were inspired by the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake,.
- Many young people went to Kobe to help.
- Japan recognized how important and valuable volunteers are.
- 1995 is called “the First Year of Volunteerism in Japan”



# Profiles of Japanese Volunteers

- Most Japanese volunteers are middle- and older-aged women, 'Housewives'.
- In the field of 'Welfare' and 'Hospital', more than 90 % are women.
- Japanese men are rarely involved in volunteer work, but this appears to be changing gradually.




# **Big Wave of Retirement Baby Boomer Generation in Japan**

- Japanese Society still has a strict ‘mandatory retirement system’.
- Japanese Baby Boomers will begin retiring in 2007.
- This will result in difficulties not only in the workplace but also in the communities.
- Japanese men have very few relationships or friends in the community.
- It will be very hard for them to become a part of the community after they retire.



# From 'Workaholic' to 'Good citizen in the community'

- It is expected that volunteer work will change 'workaholic men'.
- However, it is very difficult for Japanese seniors to change the way they live.
- Some coordinating agencies may help them.
  - Long stay in foreign countries
  - Nonprofit coordinating agencies



# NALC

## Nippon Active Life Club

- One good example is a voluntary group for retired seniors called '*NALC* : Nippon Active Life Club'.
- The leader used to work as a labor union leader and recognized that 'male workers had no friends or network in the community while their wives had rich networks'.
- This group requires that 'members be couples' so that wives can introduce their husbands to the community and volunteer work.



# Japanese version of AARP

- Many Japanese seniors are very interested in ‘AARP’, because they lack a similar functional group.
- Japanese seniors are treated as targeted objects of political parties.
- They have little influence on the Japanese political system.
- Many senior volunteers are planning to establish a Japanese version of AARP. But there has been little success thus far.



## Future of Japanese Senior Volunteers

- The ‘mandatory retirement system’ will become very dysfunctional for Japanese society.
- Pension reform, medical insurance reform and welfare reform will stimulate Japanese senior movements.
- We estimate that ‘Japanese senior volunteers’ will evolve into ‘Japanese Senior Movements’ in the near future.
- ‘Seniors will change Japanese Society’