

Appendix

Open Letter to United Nations Special Rapporteur Doudou Diene: Report on Education Issues of Foreign Children in the Chubu Region (Japan)

Chubu Region Multiculturalism and Gender Equality
Research Group

1. Preface

The Workshop on “Multiculturalism and Racism” at the 2005 Chuo University Global Human Security Forum recognized the importance of education issues of the children of foreign migrants. The Workshop, attended by Mr. Doudou Diene, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, discussed the report of the Multiculturalism and Gender Equality Research Group (Research Group), with the participation of concerned parties in the Chubu Region [central region of Japan], and debated the issue intensively. This Open Letter, made public both in English and Japanese, is based on the discussions that took place during the four meetings of the Research Group between the autumn of 2006 and spring of 2007. The Research Group offers this report to the Special Rapporteur as a reference.

2. Basic Principles

Before touching on the various education-related anxieties and insecurities experienced by the children of migrants in Japan’s Chubu Region, we outline the basic principles of education that frequently arose in the Research Group’s debates. Because clear acknowledgement by the Japanese government of these principles, which are often left ambiguous in today’s Japan, has been recognized as a fundamental prerequisite to resolving the education issues faced by migrant foreigners, it is necessary that we outline them to begin this report.

2.1 Children’s Right to Education

Japan has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and recognized that all children living in Japan have the right to receive an education. The problem is that children of foreign migrants, whatever their rights under the law, are

in practice not given educational opportunities equal to those of children of Japanese nationality. It is not an exaggeration to say that all the issues touched upon in this report arise from the fact that the equal access to education principle is not actually implemented.

2.2 Revision of Japan's Education System

In this sense, while discussing the need to devise specific strategies to improve the education for the children of migrants, the Research Group confirmed that the basic problem would not be solved by piecemeal measures, and that it was necessary to revise the Japanese education system itself. Since the Meiji Era, Japanese education has been placing importance on making Japanese children become citizens useful to the Japanese nation. This principle was further emphasized in the recent revision of the Basic Law on Education. It will be impossible to close the gap in education that exists between the children of migrants and children of Japanese nationality without striving for an education system that allows all children, regardless of their nationality, to gain an independent awareness of their own rights and to reach their full potential within the conditions of their own varied environments.

2.3 Respect for Commonalities and Differences

While the Minister of Education has stated that the education of children of foreign migrants should be treated similar to that of *zainichi* Koreans (Korean residents in Japan), there are actual cases of migrant children in Western international schools getting preferential treatment from the government. On the other hand, the differences in the environments where children of so-called 'oldcomers' and 'newcomers' are raised, the requirements needed to meet these environments, and their prospects for the future, necessitate that children of migrants receive an education that considers the unique circumstances in their respective communities.

2.4 Cooperation from Localities as a Unit

In order to provide appropriately developed education, it is necessary to create a national education system based on the concept of integration of Japanese children with children of various foreign communities, and in close cooperation with the board of education, school administration, public education institutions, schools for foreigners, and the citizens and businesses in each locality. This type of cooperative structure, whereby the education of children of migrants is actively

promoted at the local level as experienced by progressive localities such as those in the Chubu Region, should be emulated by other localities.

2.5 Education in One's Native Language and Japanese Language Education

The biggest issue in the education of children of migrants revolves around the provision of Japanese language education, essential to becoming part of Japanese society while maintaining their respective identities, and how this reconciles with education in one's native language that is indispensable in case the children return to their home country. Within the Japanese education system, the primary/secondary schools and schools for foreigners are treated differently, though both continue to cope with limited financial and human resources. To be able to provide children of migrants with good educational choices, there is a need to increase the availability of educational opportunities in both mother tongues and the Japanese language, as much as possible.

3. Current Conditions

3.1 "Oldcomers" and "Newcomers"

The Korean residents comprise the highest number of foreigners in Japan at present. In Aichi prefecture, however, the Brazilians comprise a bigger community than that of the Korean residents. The foreign communities established in the prefecture the Aichi Association for Residents of Foreign Nationality. Both "oldcomers" and "newcomers" emphasize multicultural education. While in principle the education of children of *nikkei* Brazilian (Brazilians of Japanese descent) migrants and that of "oldcomers" share common grounds, their respective communities have different historical relationships with Japan. Thus treating the education of these children in the same way would be a mistake.

3.2 The Education of "Oldcomers"

Regarding the problems with the education of *zainichi* Korean children, Special Rapporteur Doudou Diene offers a correct analysis in his 2005 report on racism in Japan.¹ Acknowledging this, we take a closer look at the situation in the Chubu Region in particular. There were roughly 150,000 North Korea-affiliated *zainichi* Koreans in Aichi Prefecture at the time of Japan's defeat in World War II, most of them were first-generation migrants. But many returned to their homeland after the war, leaving a population of about 60,000. Their ethnic education can be traced to Korean language classes that started in September 1945. Later a

primary school was opened for them, but it was ordered closed by the American occupation forces in 1948. This school was closed on the eve of the Korean War in 1950.

Eight to fifteen schools ethnic schools were subsequently established, and more North Korean schools were established after the Korean War. Due in part to pressure from Japanese civic activists, these schools were recognized by the Japanese government through an order from the Ministry of Education in 1965. Then, in 1970, they began receiving private-school grants. Today these schools receive 31,000 Yen grant per student.

However, the number of students declined and today five North Korean schools in Nagoya receive eight million Yen in grants. In Aichi Prefecture, villages and towns that have no ethnic schools receive a specified amount of subsidy per person. The size of the grant to ethnic schools varies, but it is much smaller than the amount received by Japanese public and private schools. This is an undeniable gap between North Korean ethnic schools and Japanese schools. Despite this, Aichi's North Korean schools currently have 10,000 graduates. Some graduates have blended into Japanese society, with several becoming entertainers and lawyers. The schools face discrimination in many areas, such as grant payments and graduation qualifications, but they work hard and have been overcoming these barriers. Japanese citizens support their work. But while North Korean schools follow the Japanese school curriculum, they are still treated as schools separate from the Japanese education system.

In the past, graduates of North Korean schools were not qualified to take university entrance examinations. Three years ago,² the Ministry of Education decided to allow each university to decide whether or not to allow North Korean school graduates to take their exams. The inability to take the university entrance examinations due to non-recognition of educational qualification is a major obstacle faced by graduates of North Korean schools. By leaving it up to each university to decide the qualifications of potential applicants, Japan is effectively avoiding the legal steps that would give graduates of North Korean schools the same opportunities provided by the Japanese schools.

Secondly, there is the issue of subsidy gap. Despite the fact that *zainichi* North Koreans pay taxes, their educational institutions do not receive subsidies. As a result, they are forced to spend thirty to forty percent of their income on their children's education. Therefore, *zainichi* North Koreans shoulder a heavier burden because of the discrepancy in subsidies between foreign and regular schools. Because the overwhelming majority of *zainichi* Koreans are permanent

residents of Japan, they must strengthen their ethnic education in order to resist the pressure to assimilate into Japanese society. On this point, it can be said that the education issues faced by *zainichi* Koreans are different from those faced by “newcomers,” who often return to their home countries and are less likely to become permanent residents.

3.3 The Education of Newcomers: The Case of Filipino Migrants

The Research Group undertook a research on the education of so-called “newcomers” - the Filipino and Indonesian migrants and the *nikkei* Brazilians and Peruvians. The research was deemed necessary because of the wide divergence in the living conditions of these newcomers according to their immigration status. In particular, unlike the *nikkei* Brazilian migrants, the undocumented status of other newcomers directly relates to the education problems of their children.

The situation of children of Filipino migrants in Aichi Prefecture is an example. There is a fundamental difference between the schools for Brazilian and Korean children and the “International Children’s School” for children of “overstaying” Filipino migrants.

The “International Children’s School” is a school for children who are refused by Japanese schools. An “International Children’s School” was established in Nagoya city in 1998 due to the refusal of the city to accept the children of “overstayers.” The city maintained this policy until 2002. Being an easier place to live in, many Filipinos have lived in Nagoya city for fifteen to twenty years without documentation. The uncertainty of their stay in the country left many of their children in very insecure conditions.

Many of these Filipino children were born in Japan, and do not speak Tagalog and Japanese well. Their language ability is at a much lower level compared to children attending schools in Japan. The deportation of their parents would also mean their deportation to the Philippines, where the language and culture are unknown to them, and where they would end up as foreigners in their own country. This was the reason for the establishment of the “International Children’s School” in Nagoya city.

There is yet another serious problem. Japanese children play with other children living in their neighborhood after school, but children of undocumented Filipinos stay inside the house all day with only the television to keep them company. The “International Children’s School” is a place where these children can go. But tighter surveillance by the immigration authorities makes it hard for these children to go out into the open at all. Whenever a rumor circulates within

the Filipino community that someone has been deported, tension rises and the school closes. And even if the parents luckily escape arrest by immigration authorities, they face the constant risk of being dismissed from work that causes so much financial insecurity.

The problem of getting to and from school is also a serious one. The “International Children’s School”³ is located in Owari-asahi City with twenty children aged four to twelve attending it. Most children commute from Nagoya City. Commuting by train is difficult, so the teachers pick up and drop off the children by driving a bus, without which they would not be able to attend school. Space is another problem. The school will run out of space if number of students increase to thirty. At the moment, the school is run from Monday to Friday each week in an Anglican church. Despite this difficult situation, the children enjoy going to school everyday.

3.4 The Education of Newcomers: The case of Indonesian migrants

To understand the problems faced by the Indonesian migrant children, it is essential to know more about Indonesia, a country with 80% Muslim population and composed of about four hundred ethnic communities. In Indonesia, literacy includes not only the alphabet but also Arabic literacy, and the school system is composed of public and Islamic schools. Public schools teach Islam and other religions and have time for prayer. The Indonesian migrant children in Japan attend Japanese schools that do not provide the aspects of education that are indispensable in their own country. There are also problems of bullying; the Indonesian migrant children do not leave schools for that reason though.

Problems associated with religion are reflected in different situations in Nagoya. Schools serve lunches that are not *halal* (permitted in Islam) forcing the Indonesian children to bring their own lunch. Praying is also a serious problem. There is lack of time and place for prayer for Muslim grown-ups working in Japanese workplaces. The Indonesian children, on the other hand, feel embarrassed praying in the presence of their friends, making it a painful school experience. Fasting during the Ramadan is not understood, and Indonesian clothes, including the use of veil by girls, generate tension in school. There are Indonesian schools in Tokyo but none in the Chubu Region. The difference in education in Indonesia and Japan is also a serious problem – Indonesian mothers have to organize private classes to meet the educational needs of their children. The Mosques give religious education.

In this way, the most serious problem faced by Indonesian children is religion-related. As far as language is concerned, Indonesian children learn to speak Japanese fluently, before their parents do. Religious education is also the responsibility of the family, but the lack of time for prayer at school, for example, is a serious problem. The problem is common in the whole Japanese society and Muslim parents have problems about prayer and fasting in the workplace, but it is especially serious in the education of children of Muslim families.

3.5 The Education of Newcomers: The Case of *nikkei* Brazilian Migrants

The *nikkei* Brazilians comprise the biggest migrant community in the Chubu Region. Since the 1990s, when they began migrating to Japan, schools for their children came up in various places. Since 2000, the Brazilian Ministry of Education had been investigating the situation and found many problems. One problem is that the children can only speak Portuguese. Even if they enter Japanese schools, they cannot understand what is taught. Even though they are bright, they are looked down on.

Then there is the issue of culture. Since they do not understand the cultural practices in Japanese schools, they are often considered a nuisance to the school. Children who speak Japanese do well in school and in the community. In many cases, however, their parents do not speak Japanese that in turn creates the problem of communication within the family.

Children who speak the Japanese language well are rejected by their home community and considered to be Japanese upon their return to Brazil. The Brazilian government, having identified these issues, decided to license Brazilian schools in Japan to educate Brazilian children using Brazil's education guidelines. One such school, Don Bosco School, opened four years ago. There are one hundred children enrolled in the school, from nursery to high school levels.

Many problems confront the Brazilian schools, the biggest problem being the teachers. With no assistance from either Brazil or Japan, the schools must find their own teachers. School buildings with small and limited number of classrooms are another problem. Without a gymnasium, they rent Komaki City's facility for physical education classes. The city has two Brazilian schools in Komaki, whose students face the problem of commuting from homes located in different places due insufficient number of school bus drivers available. Children spend long hours at school. Their parents spend long hours at work, and get home late that they cannot look after their children. In some cases, their parents work on weekends, and the children see them only for three or four hours during that

time. Brazilian textbooks and other educational materials are also a problem because they are difficult to find.

To resolve the various issues and provide better education, cooperation from the Japanese government and citizens is essential. Although there are exceptions, there is still a general lack of full understanding of the education of children from the *nikkei* Brazilian community.

3.6 The Education of Newcomers: The Case of *nikkei* Peruvian Migrants

The problems faced by Peruvian children are similar to those of the Brazilian children. However, as far as the Chubu Region is concerned, there are no Spanish-medium schools that the children from the Peruvian community can attend. It is unfortunate that there is no civil society support for the children from the Peruvian community, unlike the wholehearted support from the Brazilian community and the Japanese civil society for Brazilian schools. If there were Peruvian schools, the children who were bullied and had left the Japanese schools could find an alternative place to continue their education. This could reduce the number of children out of school.

Nikkei Peruvian children (Peruvian children of Japanese descent) have the same face as their Japanese friends, but the latter do not accept fully the former even if they speak fluent Japanese. Most of the Peruvian children are the objects of bullying. There is a high percentage of Peruvian children who do not attend school for this reason, complicated by the lack of Spanish-medium schools. The difference in the education system in their mother country is also a serious obstacle to their full participation in Japanese schools. Even simple mathematics subject taught in Japanese schools differs from schools in Peru. Peruvian children who have stayed for a long time in Japan speak Japanese fluently but do not understand Spanish, and this creates misunderstanding between them and their parents who do not speak Japanese well. It is also important for them to be fully educated about their roots and their identity.

3.7 Common Issues and Responses to Diverse Educational Needs

We have touched on educational issues confronted by the *zainichi* Korean community, the Filipino and Indonesian communities and the *nikkei* Brazilian and Peruvian communities. While we found that each community faces its own particular set of problems, it is also clear that, at the root, these communities have a variety of issues in common. We discuss these shared issues below.

4. The Problems

We have already touched on a number of problems in Japan's education system, including its unenlightened attitude toward the right of children of the foreign community to receive an education, as reflected in its targeting only children with Japanese nationality for compulsory education, as well as the legal gap between foreign schools and Japanese public and private schools. In addition to these problems, the existence of the following issues has also been confirmed.

4.1 Guaranteeing an Education

The Research Group, in examining the issue of school enrollment among children in the foreign community, and in particular having received a report based on a detailed survey conducted in Kani City (Gifu Prefecture), has confirmed that school enrollment among foreign children is not adequately guaranteed. It is clear, based on the detailed and comprehensive survey conducted in Kani City, that the environment for school enrollment for foreign children is not in order.

Seventy percent of Kani City's foreign residents are Brazilian nationals, with the next most numerous groups being Filipinos and Koreans. As of November 2006, with a population of 100,000, Kani city had 6,400 foreigners, which meant that for every fifteen residents one is a foreigner. Within that group, children who were not attending school included not only Brazilians but also Filipinos, Indians and Koreans. The survey found that, for people without Japanese citizenship, it is not an environment in which school enrollment is guaranteed.

At the same time, the data gathered from the three visits to the children's households during the survey period (2005-2006) revealed that the ratio of children attending foreign schools was exactly the same each time. Thirty percent of all foreign children in Kani City go to foreign schools. The largest number go to Brazilian schools recognized by the Brazilian government, followed by various international schools, and then North Korean schools.

Another thirty percent of the foreign children attend Japanese public schools. Thus the percentage of foreign children attending Japanese public schools is the same as the percentage of foreign children attending foreign schools.

It is reasonable to assume that the remaining forty percent of the foreign children do not attend school. If the children are not freed from this situation they will be caught between foreign schools and Japanese public schools, attending neither and continuing to miss out on schooling. Given such conditions, Japan, having ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, cannot simply argue that

foreign children are not subject to compulsory education.

Another problem that deserves public attention is the fact that many children of the migrant communities refuse to proceed to secondary school and the university. There are many factors that cause this limit to the higher education of foreign children. The Japanese university entrance examination system recognizes special measures for foreign applicants such as permitting the use of dictionaries, but this does not help eliminate the handicaps of foreign children. More radical measures have to be taken to improve the present situation where the opportunity for foreign children to receive higher education is limited as compared to Japanese children.

Further, there are a variety of problems with foreign children's school enrollment, scholastic ambitions, hopes for the future, and present living conditions, even among those children who attend school. These issues became clear during the Research Group's debates.

4.2 The Home and Guardian

Firstly, children raised in foreign migrant households are affected by the fact that their parents or other guardians do not have livelihood guaranteed by the state the way Japanese citizens do. The small subsidy for foreign schools has an impact on the finances of foreign children's households, as pointed out earlier. Students of North Korean schools have been victimized by violent attacks (cutting up of their *chima chogori*, the traditional Korean dress for women). There are many cases of children with a non-Japanese parent, perhaps through an international marriage, suffer bullying. Further, it is also common to find foreign children spending very limited time with their parents or guardians due to the latter's harsh employment conditions, while children of so-called overstayers or other undocumented migrants suffer insecurity and uncertainty as to when their parents would lose their jobs or get deported.

It was also pointed out that even among *nikkei* Latin Americans and other documented migrants, the fact that they do not know if their parents will settle in Japan or return to their home country prevents them from dreaming of the future and making concrete plans.

Employment of the parents and the family environment of foreign children is another serious problem. The reason many Peruvian children cannot speak Spanish is that both of their parents work from morning till very late at night and have no time to meet and interact with their children. The labor situation of foreign migrants in Japan is a serious problem for the education of the foreign

children that deserves to be addressed more carefully by the Japanese corporate sector and civil society.

Behind the education-related issues faced by the foreign migrant community is the fact that the present and future place of foreign children in society is not assured - a problem that has no bearing on children of Japanese nationality. This is an important issue that is often overlooked.

4.3 Racist Bullying

The problem of bullying is serious, and not adequately met by teachers in the case of foreign children. The teachers should contact more frequently the parents through home visits. For the children, most problems occur at school and their only support comes from the teachers. Their parents are completely helpless in most cases of bullying. Many Japanese deny the existence of bullying of foreign children, but it exists widely and starts with the way Japanese children look at foreign children, and despise their skin color or say "those foreigners!" An atmosphere of discrimination fills the schools. Education in Japan does not take into account the different characteristics of individuals and does not stress building individuality. It aims at producing homogeneous human beings. Therefore, the only way to eliminate the bullying of foreign children is not to educate them better, but to educate Japanese children differently to understand and appreciate the foreign children, their culture and their identity.

While there is no problem at the kindergarten level, foreign children begin to refuse to go to primary school when they become the object of bullying. A reverse trend exists at the secondary school level, where foreign children sometimes join "problem" gangs, and secondary school officials call their parents to complain about their behavior. The parents, being foreigners, find it difficult to invite the Japanese friends of their children to visit their home. And their children tend to make friends with Japanese children who are also excluded from the majority and do not find their place in the society. They begin to smoke together and join the "problem" gangs. Home visit by teachers cannot solve such situations, and a more extensive policy by the Government to address the exclusion of "problem" children, Japanese or foreigner, is necessary to solve this problem.

4.4 Educational Guidelines and Scholastic Ambition

It was pointed out that children whose "place" is unclear, who cannot plan ahead or know the degree to which language ability in Japanese or their mother tongues will be necessary for their future, are likely to suffer from a

lack of scholastic ambition. It was also noted that academic evaluations use the academic performance of Japanese children as the standard and thus ignore the living condition and potential of foreign children, which tend also to reduce those children's desire to study. Because public school teachers have no means of teaching students who do not speak Japanese, foreign students are often left to practice writing *kanji* (Chinese writing) or Japanese sentence structure while Japanese children learn social studies or science. However hard these children work, their efforts can never earn proper academic evaluation.

There have been experiments in teaching in foreign children's native language, but in such cases the instruction duties are often left in the hands of teacher-interpreters. But while these teachers can translate the Japanese curriculum into Portuguese or Tagalog, they cannot compensate for the differences in the way mathematics, social studies, science and other subjects are taught in Japan and, say, Brazil and the Philippines. It is necessary to tailor lessons to the age and abilities of the children so that, for example, a 15-year-old student in the third year of middle school does not begin his or her education in Japan by studying the Hiragana and Katakana scripts. There is also a need to devise evaluation standards so that the children themselves understand that what they have learned is being recognized.

Unless foreign children have their academic efforts properly recognized in this way, they will not develop the scholastic ambition at par with the Japanese children. Until this problem is resolved, the education gap between children of the migrant community and Japanese children will remain.

4.5 Teaching Japanese Language

The question of Japanese language education is complicated, and even when foreign children can speak Japanese, their linguistic capacity is less than sufficient. There is a need to teach foreign children to distinguish correct Japanese from improper slang and socially inappropriate parlance. The language proficiency of the foreign children begins to decrease during the primary school level and a 12-year-old child often has a language proficiency level of a 9-year-old child. It is clear that they will face serious problems when they proceed to the junior secondary school level, while the introduction of volunteers to help them learn Japanese is insufficient for them to catch up. The classes for foreign children are full of such children who are then put into the special classes of children with intellectual or learning disabilities. This causes them a serious shock, and they begin to feel inferior to the Japanese children and

lose motivation to learn. This is a second shock experienced by foreign children who are already feeling unaccepted in Japanese schools. They learn to read Chinese characters but cannot grasp their full meaning, unlike their Japanese classmates. The teachers do not understand the cultural problems they face and do not know how to deal with them. The teachers and the parents should reach a common understanding about the problems faced by the children, and schools should develop a curriculum well adapted to the specific educational needs of the children. Special curriculums should be adopted in schools with many foreign children.

4.6 Problem Posed by the Japanese Educational System

Special measures for foreign children may be necessary in the Japanese schools, but treating them excessively as special cases may hamper the development of their individual capacity. The well-intentioned teachers tend to reduce the burden of work for foreign children compared to Japanese children, but this does not help their individual development. The Japanese educational system relies too much on rules and regulations. Teachers fear any disturbance of harmony in classes, so that parents are called in when Brazilian and Peruvian children quarrel in classes for foreign children. This is meaningless because the children of the two communities get more intimate with each other by quarrelling. Brazil, for example, is a multicultural country where everybody is free. Brazilian children get tired of being forced to adapt to the innumerable rules of Japanese schools. They are accustomed to an equal camaraderie with their teachers, but in Japan the teachers stay in their office and do not permit the children to come close to them. The Japanese children are also less open to foreign friends than in Brazil. The foreign children lack a place to live with a sense of security, since their parents are always at work, causing some of them to join the “problem” children gangs. Japanese teachers must try to better understand these problems of foreign children. The Japanese educational authorities should make efforts to revise the whole educational system.

4.7 The Education of Foreign Children in an Age of Decreasing Population Rate

When Japan enters the age of decreasing population, the Japanese government must realize the importance of educating foreign children as future citizens. There is a great progress made in that direction by the Japanese civil society since its support for the education of the children of the “newcomers” did not exist some fifteen years ago. Yet there are many problems left unsolved by the Japanese state and the civil society.

5. Local Cooperation Towards a Solution

5.1 General Trends

We have described the various education-related issues confronting children of the foreign community in Japan. In addition to making Special Rapporteur Doudou Diene aware that many problems exist, the Research Group wishes to emphasize that, during its discussions, it received reports of cases in which civic groups and public administrators have addressed these problems seriously and achieved a certain degree of success. By acknowledging the issues, these groups have taken a tack opposite to that of the government, which denies the existence of any problems, and are working to make things better.

It was noted many times that the gradual progress that has been seen in the system of ethnic education for *zainichi* Koreans owes much to the Japanese citizens who helped shape public opinion in favor of eliminating the education gap. The public sentiment has also started to be aroused by the education issues of newcomers, and the Research Group acknowledged the importance of further rousing public opinion on this matter.

5.2 Efforts Made at the City and Prefectural Levels

In Kani City (Gifu Prefecture), the survey of foreign families living in the city was organized with the support of the City Board of Education. The families were interviewed three times in 2005 and 2006, and asked about the education of their children. It is one of the first surveys of this kind in Japan.

Toyohashi city emphasizes support for the education of foreign children through close cooperation among the city, schools and families. Young women volunteers, like older sisters, started three “classrooms” where the children were encouraged to come for consultation and guidance. They produced a map indicating where the children should go in case of emergency. They also organized visits to the factories in Toyohashi City found to be of considerable interest to the foreign children.

Shiga Prefecture, an inland industrial prefecture, has many foreign workers employed to assemble and process materials in many factories. 13,000 Brazilians live there, followed by Koreans, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Indonesians. The only Finnish School in Japan is also in the prefecture. The education of foreign children is a serious issue for the prefecture. In Otsu City, there are many Christian missionaries who teach in many languages to children of different nationalities. The prefecture, which considers it crucial to guarantee the education

of foreign children in their respective mother tongues, has an increasing number of classes in kindergartens, primary schools and secondary schools that introduce Portuguese language. There is an increased need for government-licensed childcare workers for foreign children, who are currently taken care of by volunteers.

Among others, a group of volunteer citizens called Tanpopo (Dandelion) organizes activities contributing to the education of foreign children. In general, the supportive activities of the citizens play an important role in supporting the education of foreign children. The support group facilitates close cooperation between the citizens and the schools particularly regarding the very important after-school activities. Also in Shiga Prefecture, the Centre for International Cooperation organizes summer sessions for guidance on the choice of secondary school for foreign primary school children. This guidance program has good interpreters and is very helpful. However, this type of guidance is better performed by the primary schools themselves rather than a center not specializing in education.

The Shiga Prefecture is considering the establishment of an international scholarship system without distinction as to nationality. Such system should replace the present national system where foreign students, once admitted in universities, have to compete on equal footing with Japanese students in getting scholarship without considering their diverse handicaps.

In Komaki City, the Ishiki Elementary School has the most number of foreign students. The Research Group has identified a number of good practices where volunteers play an important role. In general, citizen volunteers visit nine public schools and organize international classes using Portuguese and other languages to speak to foreign children who do not understand Japanese regarding different subjects so that they can return to their class somehow better equipped to catch up.

The volunteers organize, on the free afternoon of Fridays, informal meetings to assist the foreign children with their homework and play with them. This has become a place where the foreign children do not only learn but also relax, and get encouraged to face the school again. These children are encouraged to teach each other about their respective countries, by drawings and stories. Foreign children who do not like to go to school find in these meetings an occasion to play musical instruments and other activities, which help them overcome their dislike for school. Having children from different nationalities study and play together is not easy, but the volunteers persevere in their efforts to help them.

5.3 The Task Ahead

In general, though the development of the education system at the national level to improve the situation of foreign children is taking so much time, three trends have emerged at the regional level that can be seen as bringing hope to the cause.

Firstly, there is the trend towards creating cooperative structures among supporters of the foreign community to tackle the problem. An example is the “Multicultural Education Forum 2006 Aichi” where many members of the foreign communities were involved in trying to find ways of dealing with the problem, and in participating in the government-sponsored conference on prefectural “citizens” with foreign nationalities. There is a need for a system of cooperation between those involved at the national and regional levels in the future.

Secondly, while the Research Group was able to produce a detailed report on a comprehensive survey of the situation of foreigners living in Kani City, there is no accurate information about the situation of education of foreign children. But surveys are beginning to include issues such as the rate of children refusing to go to school and thus at the very least there are parts of the country that are taking steps toward solutions. It would be ideal if Kani City was used as a model, and surveys and information-gathering about the education of children of foreigners were made nationwide.

Thirdly, there are reports about the various modes of cooperation between the parents/guardians in the foreign community, schools (Japanese and foreign), educators, and the local government. Many examples were given, including inter-school soccer matches, cultural understanding classes sponsored by a Japanese school where members of the foreign community participate in the Parents-Teachers Association, and cases showing cooperation between Japanese language educators and the government. There is need for further consultation in the future regarding the relationship between education in the Japanese language and education in foreign languages in order to provide comprehensive measures, bearing in mind the needs of the children. The Research Group also reported on case studies showing boards of education and the government making earnest efforts regarding the education of the foreign children. If the progressive steps taken by some local governments spread among local governments in general, then we can expect that this will be a trigger for policy change at the national level.

These are the conclusions of The Multiculturalism and Gender Equality

Research Group for the Chubu Region after holding four study group sessions on the education of foreign children, and which had the pleasure of presenting its report to Special Rapporteur Doudou Diène. The report focuses only on the situation in the Chubu Region, but this area has a high number of migrants, so it can be considered to be a microcosm of the issue on a Japan-wide basis. We hope that Special Rapporteur Doudou Diène finds this report useful in promoting the fight against racism in Japan at the United Nations level.

Endnotes

¹For the full 2005 report of Doudou Diène see Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, Doudou Diène – Mission to Japan, E/CN.4/2006/16/Add.2, 24 January 2006.

²This development likely occurred in 2003.

³This is formally known as the Ecumenical Learning Center for Children.