

Preface

EROPA (The Eastern Regional Organization for Public Administration) was founded in December 1960 as an international non-governmental organization. Its major objective has been to promote the economic and social developments of various countries in the Asia and Pacific region. The central secretariat is located in the Philippines. It operates three regional centres in New Delhi, Tokyo, and Seoul. These centres function as either a training ground or a research hub for the member states of the organization.

The year 2006 marks the forty-sixth year since the inauguration of EROPA. State, group and individual members of this international organization are all extremely proud of the fact that it is the only non-profit and global association devoted to the study of public administration in the Asia and Pacific region. EROPA has been able to continue working as a viable organization essentially because of ever lasting friendship and cooperation among these different members of the organization. Needless to point out, without their support and dedication, EROPA would not have been able to function as a robust and practical association in this region.

Japan is one of the original members of EROPA and has been involved in its different activities through Local Autonomy College, the research and training institution of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications. Affiliated with EROPA, the College houses the EROPA Local Government Centre, while it has been offering training courses, research activities and publications of different materials on local government and governance relative to the EROPA area.

So far we have delivered eight volumes of publication, *Comparative Studies of Public Administration*.

The first volume published in 1984 was a study of public administration; the second in 1986 was on the professional training of public administrators; the third in 1990 dealt with the role of local government in depopulated areas of developing nations. The fourth volume in 1992 analyzed the interactions among residents, non-governmental organizations and quasi-public agencies in the Asia-Pacific configuration. The fifth volume in 1994 examined the issue of human resource development in both developed and developing countries. The sixth volume in 1998 considered local government reform from cross-national perspective, and the seventh in 2001 devoted to the problem of local governance within the context of national development. Finally, in 2004, the eighth volume addressed the public reform, new public management and local governance.

The topic of Volume Nine is on "Civil Society and Local Governance." In recent years, civil society organizations have grown dramatically. It is often seen that they are effectively participating in local governance. In the essays of this publication from seven countries there are analysis and discussion on the civil society

organizations in their respective regions. Those organisations vary in form and style, but they all play significant roles in all of these countries.

In Japan, local governments have traditionally been one of the most important agents of social service delivery. As well as having been the provider of social welfare services, they have also carried out various programs for the aged, the handicapped, and other needy segments of society. Increasingly, these local governments are facing the problem of financial shortages on one hand, and declining population on the other. Confronted with these issues, many local governments in the country have been considering redefining the role and the function of the public sector. At the same time, an increasing number of people believe that local governments should collaborate with civil society organizations to try to resolve together the problems of mounting social issues at the local level.

As the following chapters show, both social and political milieus differ among countries in the EROPA region, as do local administrative circumstances. In some countries, redefinition of the public sector has been called for, while in others, contention has been mounting for the substantial renovation of methods of public service deliveries. Many feel that various forms of collaboration between public and private sectors are becoming increasingly necessary in the delivery of different public services. In several states, various attempts have already been made to foster indigenous community based organizations (CBO) as an important agent to extend different social programs. These home-grown institutions would hopefully replace exogenous NGOs and help improve social conditions in developing environments.

The current issue elaborates on the role of civil society in the delivery of public services, presenting and describing various examples, which are critically analyzed by leading experts in this area of study.

On behalf of both EROPA Local Government Centre and Local Autonomy College, we hope the latest publication will help improve our comprehension of the prospect of national and local governances in the Asia and Pacific region and focus on the advancement of the civil society.

In closing, in publishing *Comparative Study*, I would like to make two extra notes. This publication was enabled by financial support from the General Center for Local Autonomy (*Jichi Sogo Senta*). I would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Centre. Likewise, I would also like to express our special thanks to Professor Akira Nakamura of Provost and Dean of the Graduate School of Meiji University, Tokyo. His support in editing the volume has enriched the quality of this volume.

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