

**Civil Society and Local Governance in Japan:  
Historical Development and  
Recent Policy Issues**

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## Civil Society and Local Governance in Japan: Historical Development and Recent Policy Issues

### Introduction

The proliferation of Non-Profit Organizations (NPOs) and the rise of civil society in the public governance are a common social phenomenon in the post-welfare states around the world. Japan is not an exception. Japan has been a strong bureaucratic state where the national government plays more positive role in securing public welfare through various policy actions (Tsuji 1969; Koike 1994). However, since the end of 1970s, it became apparent that the Government of Japan would not be able to finance expenditures if it would expand welfare program. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s the conservative political leaders cut public expenditure and reduced the role of public sector, asking people not to dependent upon public welfare programs. It is unquestionable that the limit of state intervention has triggered the emergence of NPOs or civil society organizations in the public domain.<sup>1</sup> In the discussion of Japanese civil society, however, we could not dismiss the impact of the disaster of the Great Hanshin Awaji Earthquake in 1995 on the attitude of the people. Then, a number of citizens participated in the rescue activities to help victims of earthquake tragedy. The media admired the rise of voluntary actions in Japanese society and it also triggered off series of legislative debate and legal framework for the promotion of non-profit activities. Two years later, the heavy oil leak from the wrecked tanker *Nakhodka* polluted the seashore of Ishikawa Prefecture.<sup>2</sup> About 15,000 volunteers worked for removing the oil at the shore in the month of the oil leak. By this, legislative actions were further accelerated. After the intensive deliberations in the both Houses of the Diet, the Bill to Promote Specified Nonprofit Activities ("NPO Bill") passed the Diet in March 1998.

Since then, various local NPOs have sprung up like mushrooms after a rainfall in every corner of Japan. Because of its short space of historical existence, most non-profit organizations are small in membership and their financial resources are limited. Some are complementary to local government in the public service provision and sometimes conflict with neighborhood associations. Nevertheless, the emergence of civil society organizations suggests us that the bureaucratic nature of Japan's public governance has been transforming gradually at the grassroots. It is a journey to establish "new governance" in Japan through collaboration of public and private organizations, and a journey to rediscover the vitality of solidarity that has embedded in Japanese society.

For the understanding of the characteristic of Japanese civil society and recent debates on it, the authors will summarize the historical development of the civil society as well as examine the legislative process of the NPO Law of 1998 in the first

half of the paper. Then, we will proceed to examine the current status of NPOs, recent collaboration with local government with particular reference to the cases in Kanagawa Prefecture in Japan.

## 1. Historical Development of Japanese Civil Society

### 1.1 Prewar Period

In general, activities of civil society organizations were inactive in the prewar Japan. Under the highly centralized bureaucratic structure, the Meiji government (1868–1912) restricted the activities of civil society and emphasized “reciprocal help” in the neighborhood. The Meiji Government introduced a series of regulations to control the growth of political parties and civic associations. As a result, voluntary actions throughout the Meiji era were remained in a kind of “philanthropy” of religious groups<sup>3</sup> or “respected persons” in communities (Economic Planning Agency 2000).

A remarkable development in civil society in the Meiji era was that the Christianity organizations emerged as important actor in establishing the foundation. For instance, Okayama Orphanage was established in 1887 and incorporated in 1903 (Imada 2003). In the early 1900s, emerging “new middle class” including those who were professionals and Christians established private charities, orphanages, and reformatories. The Salvation Army, the Women’s Christian Temperance, and the Young Men Christian Association (YMCA) are the major Christian organizations established in this period (Garon 2003).

In the Taisho era (1912–1926), young generation joined in the poor relief activities through the “settlement movement” that originated in the 19th social reformers.<sup>4</sup> After the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923, “settlement movement” flourished among university students. However, the authoritative government feared the growth of anti-government sentiment among young generations and oppressed the development of settlement movement.

In the wartime (1937–1945), the government strictly regulated the activities of civic associations and ordered them to disband and become the part of the patriotic associations under Imperial Rule Assistance Association (IRAA). Moreover, the government imposed on the citizens to form new community organizations: block associations (*chonaikai*)<sup>5</sup> and neighborhood associations (*tonarigumi*).<sup>5</sup> In the wartime, however, a new opportunity for the women’s groups opened up, Ichikawa Fusae, a former suffragist supported the creation of about 20-million-member Greater Japan Women’s Association in 1942 (Garon 2003). In the rural areas, women’s associations transformed into new wartime chapter and in the cities, neighborhood associations were led by leaders of the former women’s groups, which expanded the network within wives to survive the war (Fuji 1985).

### 1.2 Postwar Period

After the promulgation of the current Japanese Constitution, the activity of forming new civic organizations intensified. Not only religious organizations but

also numerous nonprofit organizations were established for the interest of memberships or for the general public. Among them, the women's associations became very active in the postwar era. Women gained suffrage and joined the political process. The new women's organization, the Women's Democratic Club established and advocated for the gender equality. Moreover, the housewives formed the Housewives Associations in 1948 and advocated against price fixing and unsafe products. In the local areas, women founded the National Federation of Regional Women's Organizations (*Zen Chifuren*). Most women belonged to the nationally federated Agricultural Cooperatives (*Nokyo*).

However, in the process of economic recovery of the 1950s and 1960s, civil society was less developed in Japan. People continued to urge government to provide quality education, medical services, public housing, and other public services. The reliance on the governmental actions strengthens the role of public bureaucracies and it weakens the opportunity to establish the independence of civil society from government. Although the high economic growth created a "middle class" society, people were enthusiastic in consumption of new goods and paid no attention to the importance of civil society for their common interest. Inoguchi (2002) insists that the collectivism and the state-led developmental model stood the way of developing the social capital in Japan. In era of the rapid economic expansion of Japan in the mid 1960s and 1970s, the collectivism and state-led developmental model dominated the society as a whole. Moreover, Japan has been in the middle of transforming from the honorific collectivism to cooperative individualism. In the end, rapid economic expansion postponed the "transition from honorific collectivism to a relatively opened social capital" (Inoguchi, 2002, p. 390).

The late 1960s and early 1970s became a turning point for civil society in Japan. Citizen protest movements sprung up across the nation. Some protested against Vietnam War and US-Japan military relations. Others frowned against the environmental pollution and blamed inaction of government.<sup>7</sup> These environmental movements did not last long since their major concern was their local pollution problems. Nevertheless, citizen movements and community actions contributed to the transformation of the Japanese society in certain degree, for they demonstrated the effectiveness of civil society in protecting their life and property when necessary.

In the 1980s, citizen protest movements settled down. National government introduced a series of environment protection regulations and local governments established some measures on citizen participation and information disclosure. A remarkable change is that citizens do not hesitate to organize voluntary groups for collective action. Throughout the 1980s the government reduced budget for welfare programs, then, citizens participated in organizing voluntary associations for mutual help. When they realized that government would not protect their environment any more, they organized groups to press government actions and did something by themselves. However, it was not easy for citizen to establish "judicial person" for nonprofit activities. Since the Meiji era, the condition for establishing the nonprofit organization (judicial person for nonprofit activities)<sup>8</sup> had been very strict under the bureaucratic control.<sup>9</sup>

## 2. Legislative Process of the 1998 NPO Law

### 2.1 Background

It was the late 1980s that the government launched the programs to change tradition of bureaucracy-led governance through administrative reforms. Inspired by the success story of neo-liberalism strategy in the Anglo-American countries, conservative government introduced measures to reduce the role of ministries in domestic policies. Two major reform programs are deeply linked to the revision of civil society in Japan. The first is the welfare reform that revised medical insurance program for the elderly. The new welfare strategy called “the Gold Plan” emphasized the role of local government in providing care services for the aged population. The new policy encouraged local mayors to invite private entrepreneur and voluntary organization in the delivery of social services in communities (Koike 2002). The second derived from the promotion of decentralization. Following a proposal by the national administrative reform council in 1983, conservative government took two legislative actions, namely the Decentralization Promotion Law of 1995 and the 1999 Omnibus Law of Decentralization to change the relationship of national and local governments from hierarchy to horizontal cooperation (Koike 2001). Under the decentralization strategy, more local governments have reduced public employees through contracting-out and privatization, and called for the involvement of non-profit organizations in the delivery of local public services.

These political actions prepared a series of legislative actions on the NPO Law in the 1990s. By 1994, citizen groups and NPOs formed a coalition to support new legislation for establishing the nonprofit organizations without the influence of governmental jurisdiction. As we mentioned earlier, disasters from the Great Hanshin Awaji Earthquake showed that the existing Japanese legal framework to establish the non-profit organizations was dysfunctional. Public opinion criticized it and pressured the government to establish the new legislation to form nonprofit organizations not affiliated the governmental ministries. Earthquake attacked Kobe when the controversy between government and civil society began.

### 2.2 Political Process of NPO Legislation

On February 3, 1995, the multi-party groups of the Diet members formed the Liaison Committee to draft the new legislation. In the same month, coalitional government of that time, consisted of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the Sakigake Party formed the NPO Project Team to propose the new legislation. The main actors in this project team were Akihiko Kumashiro (LDP), Kiyomi Tsujimoto (SDP), and Akiko Domoto (Sakigake). In February, March and April, the governing coalition parties, the New Frontier Party (NFP), and multi-party groups had public hearing about the NPO bill respectively and the New Frontier Party submitted the *Bill regarding the Granting of Legal Person Status to Groups Performing Citizens Public Interest Activities*. In response to this motion by the New Frontier Party, the NPO Project Team pressured the NFP that

the House members would submit the NPO bill. Because of the distrust for bureaucrats from the civil society, bureaucracy was completely placed outside of legislation process of the NPO bill (Pekkanen 2003; Yamamoto 1999).

Some arguments against the new NPO bill from the conservative politicians include (1) conservative politicians are much skeptical about roles of the NPO, (2) The word "citizen" means the left, (3) the use of English word "NPO is irrelevant in the Japanese bill (Yamamoto 1999). Moreover, there were disagreements over the content of the NPO bill. The LDP insisted the requirement of the annual report to the ministry for scrutiny and the right of ministry to permit the establishment of new NPOs. SDP and Sakigake were against the LDP's position and insisted the free formation and operation of NPOs. Although there were disagreements even among the members of NPO Project Team, the outline of the Citizens Activities Promotion Bill (provisional name) was worked out and signed on December 14, 1995. After signing this draft law, the LDP became liberalized for this matter<sup>10</sup> and the NPO Project Team issued on February 1, 1996 the *Governing Parties NPO Project Confirmed Matters* on that curtailed bureaucrat screening discretion of permission for forming NPOs.

However, the LDP changed its attitude and became sluggish toward NPO bill again. On April 11, 1996, the NPO Project Team convened and SDP and Sakigake were dissatisfied with the LDP's change. On May 27, it had decided not to submit the NPO Bill and the New Frontier Party submitted the *Bill to Amend One Part of Legal Person Tax Law* to the Diet. At this point, the Coordination Council of Governing Parties decided to take over the debate from the NPO Project Team. Meanwhile, the LDP changed its position again that it would basically agree with the Sakigake and SDP. The Coordination Council issued *the Agreement on the Citizens Activities Promotion Bill (NPO Bill)* on September 19, 1996. Some reasons for the LDP position shift were partly related to the Aged Care Law, for the new NPO bill might increase the number of welfare voluntary groups. The second is the electoral reasons; the rise of Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ). The DPJ gained the power and was the prominent supporter for NPO bill. Since the LDP needed the SDP and the Sakigake to form the coalitional government in the House of Councilors, it decided to compromise to agree with SDP and Sakigake on the NPO bill matter. The governing parties submitted the *NPO Bill* on December 16, 1996 (Pekkanen 2003).

The LDP and DPJ discussed over the issues and searched for the compromise for passing the NPO Law. On May 22, 1997, the LDP and DPJ agreed to submit the NPO bill to the Diet with the nine amendments<sup>11</sup> proposed by the DPJ. Additionally the amended NPO bill was submitted to the Diet and the debate over this bill began at the Cabinet Committee on May 22, 1997. The bill was approved by the Cabinet Committee on June 5 and passed the House of Representatives on June 6, 1997.

In the deliberation process of the NPO bill in the House of Councilors, the name of the bill changed to the *Bill for Promotion of Specified Non-Profit Activities* at the Parliamentary Strategy Committee of the LDP's House of Councilors on November 28, 1997. In the bill, the new name of the legal person became the *Specified Non Profit Legal Persons*. For civil society, the new name of legal person became more inclu-

sive.

The media and business groups pressed the government to pass the bill. Major newspapers like *Mainichi*, *Nikkei*, and *Yomiuri* called for the passage of the NPO bill. The Federation of Economic Organizations published *A Call for the Quick Passage during that going Diet Session of the Citizens' Activities Promotion Bill (NPO Bill)*. However, the Heiseikai Party and the Sun Party submitted their own NPO bill, the

Table 1 Major Legislative Actions for the NPO Law of 1998

1995	
Jan. 17	The Great Awaji Hanshin Earthquake
Feb. 3	Established 18 Interagency groups formed the Liaison Office
Feb. 15	Formed the NPO Project Team by governing party
Dec. 14	NPO Project Team submitted Citizens Activities Promotion Law Draft Law Outline.
1996	
May 31	New Frontier Party submitted the Draft Law to Amend One Part of Legal Person Tax
Dec. 16	The Governing Parties submitted the NPO Draft Law.
1997	
Feb. 6	The DPJ Policy Coordinating Committee approved the DPJ Thinking on the (Governing Parties) NPO Draft Law.
May 22	The amended NPO Draft Law was submitted to the Diet and the debate over this bill began at the Cabinet Committee.
Jun. 5	The draft law was approved by the Cabinet Committee.
Jun. 6	The draft law was passed at the House of Representatives.
Dec. 5	The Heiseikai and the Sun Party submitted their own NPO bills, the Citizens Public Interest Activities Legal Person Bill (outline).
Dec. 12	Three NPO bills continued to be under the consideration from the previous 141 Diet.
1998	
Jan. 22	Three NPO bills were explained at the Labor and Social Policy Committee of the 142 Diet.
Feb. 26	The bill supported by LDP, SDP, Komei and Sakigake was submitted.
Mar. 3	The Law for Promotion of Specified Non Profit Activities was passed at the Labor and Social Policy Committee by unanimous vote.
Mar. 4	The Law for Promotion of Specified Non Profit Activities was passed at the House of Councilors.
Mar. 19	The Law for Promotion of Specified Non Profit Activities was passed at the House of Representatives by a unanimous vote.
Mar. 25	The Law for Promotion of Specified Non Profit Activities was promulgated.
Dec. 1	The Law for Promotion of Specified Non Profit Activities became effective.

Source: This list made by authors based on information from Pekkanen, R. (2003).



*Citizens Public Interest Activities Legal Person Bill* (outline) on December 5, 1997.

On December 12, 1997, three NPO bills continued to be under the deliberation from the previous 141st Diet Session. They are Japanese Communist Party bill, the Heiseikai and Sun Party bill, and the ruling party bill amended by DPJ. The discussion session of these three bills took place on February 12, 17, 19, and 24. The bill supported by LDP, SDP, Komei, and Sakigake was revised and renamed as the *Bill for the Promotion of Specified Non Profit Activities*. The bill passed at the Labor and Social Policy Committee by a unanimous vote on March 3, 1998 and at the House of Councilors on March 4, 1998. Finally, the bill got passed at the House of Representatives by a unanimous vote on March 19, 1998. The Table 1 summarizes the legislative history of the NPO Bill.

### 3. Current Status of NPOs in Japan

#### 3.1 The 1998 NPO Law

The NPO Law aimed to contribute to the public interest by promoting the sound development of nonprofit activities, which is divided in to 12 groups in 1998. In the 2002 revision<sup>12</sup>, the number of the groups was divided based on the public interest configurations to 17 groups as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Seventeen Categories of NPOs

(1) Health, social welfare	(13) Promotion of the science and technology
(2) Social education	(14) Stimulation of economic activities
(3) Community development	(15) Development of capacity building or assistance in expanding the employment opportunity
(4) Culture, arts, and sports	(16) Protection of consumers
(5) Environmental protection	(17) Liaising, advising, and support activities related to organizations performing any of the aforementioned activities
(6) Disaster-relief activities	
(7) Community safety	
(8) Human rights and international peace	
(9) International cooperation	
(10) The creation of a gender-equal society	
(11) The sound nurturing of youth	
(12) Development of information society	

Source: Cabinet Office (2005b).

The term of the NPO refers to an organization that is incorporated in accordance with the provision of this law and can further be defined as one that:

- (1) Does not seek to make a profit, while neither
  - (a) Attaching unreasonable importance to gaining or losing membership status, nor
  - (b) Having more than one-third of its officers receive remuneration.
- (2) Does not have as its main purposes
  - (a) The spreading of religious doctrine, performing of religious services or rituals, or preaching;
  - (b) The promotion, support, or opposition of political principles; or

- (c) The recommendation, support, or opposition of a candidate for a certain public office, a public official, or a political party.

The NPO Law requires that NPOs should have ten or more members, and may engage in profit-making projects provided that the profits are used for nonprofit activities and do not interfere with profit activities. Moreover, it stipulates that prefecture governors shall serve as the competent authorities for those NPOs that establish an office or offices in prefectures.

After NPO Law enacted in 1998, the number of the incorporated NPOs are 22,723 December 31, 2005 (see Table 3).<sup>13</sup>

As of category of these incorporated NPOs activities, the number of the NPOs that focused on health care and social welfare accounts about 57 percent of the total number of the activities (see Table 4). Moreover, the NPOs focused on the promotion of the social education and community development occupied the large portion of the total NPO activities. Based on the prefecture category, the one third of the NPOs is located in Tokyo, Kanagawa, and Osaka (JCIE 2003).

There are some reevaluations of the NPO Law enacted in 1998. The amendment to the tax measures for NPOs mentions the eligibility of tax-deductible status to NPOs. Effective from April 1, 2003, even a small scale NPO was liable to tax deduc-

**Table 3** The Number of the Incorporated NPOs by Prefecture  
(As of December 31, 2005)

Hokkaido	937	Ishikawa	177	Okayama	279
Aomori	177	Fukui	153	Hiroshima	377
Iwate	222	Yamanashi	145	Yamaguchi	219
Miyagi	376	Nagano	507	Tokushima	125
Akita	122	Gifu	325	Kagawa	144
Yamagata	190	Shizuoka	531	Ehime	184
Fukushima	300	Aichi	800	Kochi	155
Ibaraki	298	Mie	363	Fukuoka	787
Tochigi	269	Shiga	258	Saga	161
Gunma	413	Kyoto	627	Nagasaki	224
Saitama	804	Osaka	1,909	Kumamoto	285
Chiba	971	Hyogo	849	Oita	250
Tokyo	4,647	Nara	191	Miyazaki	149
Kanagawa	1,491	Wakayama	186	Kagoshima	243
Niigata	339	Tottori	94	Okinawa	203
Toyama	142	Shimane	125		
				Total	22,723

Source: Cabinet Office (2005a)

- (c) The recommendation, support, or opposition of a candidate for a certain public office, a public official, or a political party.

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Source: Cabinet Office (2005a)

**Table 4** The Number of the Incorporated NPOs by Category  
(As of December 31, 2005)

		Number of the NPOs	Ratio (%)	Increase from September, 2005
1	Health, social welfare	14,092	56.9	678
2	Social education	11,640	47.0	523
3	Community development	9,947	40.2	510
4	Culture, arts and sports	7,954	32.1	387
5	Environmental protection	7,144	28.8	329
6	Disaster-relief activities	1,628	6.6	82
7	Community safety	2,313	9.3	141
8	Human rights and international peace	3,775	15.2	170
9	International cooperation	5,255	21.2	177
10	The creation of a gender-equal society	2,215	8.9	87
11	The sound nurturing of youth	9,810	39.6	482
12	Development of information society	1,800	7.3	168
13	Promotion of the science and technology	890	3.6	79
14	Stimulation of economic activities	2,428	9.8	256
15	Development of capacity building or assistance in expanding the employment opportunity	2,981	12.0	334
16	Protection of consumers	1,068	4.3	101
17	Liaising, advising, and support activities related to organizations performing any of the aforementioned activities	11,069	44.7	570

Source: Cabinet Office (2005b).

tions. Moreover, the regulation that one-third of an organization's total revenues must come from donations and grants are loosened.

In June 2003, the Cabinet approved the outline of proposed reform. First, the current public interest corporations would be placed under this new category of nonprofit judicial person. Secondly, the process of the incorporation of the NPOs should be simplified as to enable organizations to incorporate without the approval of government agencies. Thirdly, the system of awarding tax-exempt status to select nonprofit corporations that are considered to contribute greatly to the public interest and to society should be introduced. Additionally, the clear guideline and criteria for the tax-exempt eligibility should be established.

### **3.2 Challenges for the NPO**

Scholars have discussed some future challenges for NPOs. The most crucial issue is the tax deductible and exemption. If the criteria for awarding the tax

exemption status are extremely strict, many nonprofit corporations will face paying taxes on all income including contributions, membership dues, and grants, which had been tax-exempt. Moreover, the status of the independent entity of the government should be maintained even when the NGOs receive the tax exemption. The tax exempt issue should not be separated from the tax deductible issue since nonprofit corporations may have to undergo a third layer of approval which means those for incorporation and tax-exempt status (JCIE 2003). Additionally, the consumers should be tax-deducted on their donation to the NGOs.

Another future challenge for NGOs is to show clearly that civil society contributes the society effectively to improve public governance. Civil society should play important roles as the watchdog and observe the social problems from the personal and human dimension. Rather than concentrate on criticizing the government policy, civil society should propose alternative policy change to build better governance including government, business and people (Yamamoto 1999).

Moreover, the capacity building in the organization is another challenge for the development of civil society. It is important to enhance the level of human resources and professional expertise. The problem of the private foundation and research institute is that these organizations hire the former bureaucrats and retired businessmen. The nonprofit organizations should hire the individuals who contributed and dedicated to the organizations themselves. Moreover, the matter of the transparency and accountability should be resolved as to file annual financial statements for public record.

It is crucial for the stakeholders, such as government, business and civil society to clarify their each role, which is inevitable for building the partnership (Yamamoto 1999). It is not always effective to involve business and civil society in supplying public services. Once the partnership between the government and the supplier fixed, there are always chance of corruption and mismanagement. It emphasizes that we should establish a good accountability structure in public governance in which every person could access to evaluating partnership programs. These are some of the future challenges for development of civil society in Japan.

## **4. Local Governance and NPOs: A Case of Kanagawa Prefecture**

### ***4.1 NPOs in Kanagawa Prefecture***

It is the prefecture government that certifies the incorporation of NPOs.<sup>14</sup> As a supervising authority, prefecture government supports volunteer groups in many ways. In this section, we take a case of Kanagawa Prefecture Government, which is one of the fast runners in supporting NPOs in Japan.

Prior to the enactment of NPO Law in 1998, Kanagawa Prefecture Government established the Volunteer Support Center on April 1, 1996. The purpose of the center is to support voluntary and nonprofit activities that contribute to the society as a whole and to build the center for partnership between government and NPOs across the various policy fields. Additionally, it has an important function as the support center for the disaster relief activity and established the 21 Voluntary Activity

**Table 5** The Number of the Incorporated NPOs in Kanagawa Prefecture  
(As of February 28, 2006)

FY 1998	FY 1999	FY 2000	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005	Total
6	96	118	144	223	318	336	313	1,554

Source: Kanagawa Volunteer Support Center (2006).

**Table 6** The Number of the Incorporated NPOs in Kanagawa Prefecture by municipalities  
(As of February 28, 2006)

Yokohama	735	Kawasaki	178	Yokosuka	62	Hiratsuka	50	Kamakura	55
Fujisawa	81	Odawara	30	Chigasaki	40	Zushi	16	Sagamihara	61
Miura	8	Hatano	22	Atsugi	37	Yamato	34	Isehara	21
Ebina	25	Zama	14	Minamiashigara	6	Ayase	12		
Hayama	13	Samukawa	8	Oiso	6	Ninomiya	5	Nakai	0
Oi	1	Matsuda	3	Yamakita	4	Kaisei	2	Hakone	3
Manazuru	1	Yugawara	1	Aikawa	2	Kiyokawa	1	Shiroyama	2
Tsukui	1	Sagamikocho	2	Fujino	6				

Source: Kanagawa Volunteer Support Center (2006).

Promotion Fund Program. The structure of the center consists of one division and three sections including voluntary activity section and fund program section (see Appendix A).

In Kanagawa, various types of NPOs use the Support Center. The total number of the incorporated NPOs is 1,554<sup>15</sup> (as of February 28, 2006). Table 5 shows the number of incorporated NPOs year by year. It suggests that number of newly incorporated NPOs is growing constantly. From the Table 6, we can observe that most of the NPOs are located in Yokohama City, a capital of Kanagawa Prefecture. Municipalities with less population have less NPOs. Exception is Kamakura City. Kamakura is a historic city and has a number of voluntary groups working for the preservation of environment.

The Table 7 is a categorization of the activities of the NPOs in Kanagawa Prefecture. It is apparent that more than half (862) of the NPOs focus on "health care and social welfare" activity. Followers are "sound nutrition of youth" (382), "social education" (334), "community development" (301), "culture, arts and sport" (266), and "environmental protection" (252).

#### **4.2 Role of the Kanagawa Voluntary Support Center**

The most important role of the Kanagawa Volunteer Support Center is to provide information for the voluntary groups, consultancy on activities, networking among the local NPOs, and to promote partnership with Kanagawa Prefecture Government.

**Table 7** The Number of the Incorporated NPOs in Kanagawa Prefecture by Category  
(As of February 28, 2006)

1	Health, social welfare	862	12	Development of information society	47
2	Social education	334	13	Promotion of the science and technology	17
3	Community development	301			
4	Culture, arts and sports	266	14	Stimulation of economic activities	63
5	Environmental protection	252	15	Development of capacity building or assistance	90
6	Disaster-relief activities	34			
7	Community safety	47	16	Protection of consumers	31
8	Human rights and international peace	137	17	Liaising, advising, and support activities related to organizations performing any of the aforementioned activities	288
9	International cooperation	178			
10	The creation of a gender-equal society	40			
11	The sound nurturing of youth	382			

Data based on the multiple responses.

Source: Kanagawa Voluntary Support Center (2006).

#### 4.2.1 Information Center for Voluntary Organizations

The support center provides the information on various books, leaflets, and other materials that are related to the volunteering and NPOs. It provides the computers, which enable the users to write materials for civil activities and to do research by the Internet. Information of the fund program is available for users on this information section. Basic idea of the support center is that users are able to gain the information through the Internet and builds the network information system. As of March 2005, there are 7,062 materials on civil society, NPO Law and administration (see Table 8).

As a tool for the information exchange, the support center publishes the leaflet, "Junction" every other month. The purpose of publishing leaflet is to provide the much information based on the theme.

#### 4.2.2 Voluntary Activity Consultation

The information and consulting booth of the support center plays a role of mutual exchange among the voluntary groups and assists in expanding the network of the voluntary activities. It has been consult with voluntary groups across the various fields since 1996. Advisers have been in charge every day with the expertise include environment, gender-equality, social welfare, civic activities, and international fields. These advisers are selected through public recruitment.

The number of the users of consulting booth was 1,668 in 2003 and 4.6 persons as an average per day visited the booth. The area of the consultation focused on social welfare, international cooperation and foreign people assistance. The content of the consultation is related to the volunteering supply and demand and administration of NPOs.

**Table 8** The Number of the Research Materials in Information Center  
(As of March, 2005)

Field	Books	Leaflets	Total
Civil activity	832	139	971
Volunteer	463	72	535
Health care and social welfare	827	263	1,090
International Cooperation	501	176	677
Environment protection	572	188	760
The sound nurturing of youth	287	88	375
Life long study	69	28	97
Culture and sports	69	18	87
Community development	459	79	538
Consumer protection	16	4	20
Gender equal society	179	32	211
Human rights and international peace	139	16	155
Disaster-relief	693	123	816
Development of capacity building or support of expanding the employment opportunity	19	4	23
Community safety	0	0	0
Information	15	0	15
Promotion of the science and technology	0	0	0
Stimulation of economic activity	2	2	4
Support of NPOs	249	85	334
Miscellaneous	349	5	354
Total	5,740	1,322	7,062

Source: Kanagawa Voluntary Support Center (2005).

The consulting booth started new service of the management consultation of NPOs in 2001. The main themes of this kind of consultation are as follows; (1) incorporation of NPOs, (2) administration and management of groups, (3) accounting and financial matter of the groups, (4) personnel and labor management.

#### 4.2.3 Networking of the Public Support Facilities

After the enactment of NPO Law, local governments in Kanagawa Prefecture have established their own local ordinances to support civic activities and built civic activity support centers. For the promotion of networking across the municipalities, the support center established the Committee for Network. The purpose of the committee is to share the information and common challenge as well as support the civic



**Table 9** Lectures for Training of Local Voluntary Support Center

1	Basic	*Civic activity-current condition and direction of Kanagawa prefecture
2	Basic	*Supporting facilities and its coordinators- their characteristics and necessary qualification *Observation of coordinators' work in the supporting facilities
3	Practical	*Program of consultation skill up Filing and information management Case study of consultation for "comprehensive study" Coaching and advise
4	Management	*Program and risk management *Example of risk in the area of social welfare *Program and risk of NPOs
5	Management	*Community development and support facilities *Program in the case of disaster
6	Skill up	*Partnership program and coordinator Learning from various programs
7	Skill up	*Assessment program and supporting facilities Study of evaluation sheets

Source: Kanagawa Voluntary Support Center (2005).

activities through collaboration with local governments that have local support centers.

The role of the Committee for Network is to involve in capacity building in the local support centers. Currently, Kanagawa Prefecture Government, NPOs, and project groups have administered three project-planning meetings. The number of the participants of the seven training lectures was about 40 people (see Table 9).

#### 4.2.4 Center for the Partnership

The Kanagawa Voluntary Support Center Committee was established on November 18, 2003 as a support-center forum for discussing the management of the support center between the users and support center.

As the center for partnership between voluntary groups and prefecture organizations, the system of "partnership room" started from April 2001. Establishment of "partnership room" is used for preparation and management for the accepted programs sponsored by the prefecture government. To work with prefecture organizations, voluntary groups submit the application with discussion agenda. If the agenda is accepted, the government section related to the agenda will submit the use of "partnership room".

In 2004, 16 voluntary organizations used the "partnership room" to discuss the program with prefecture office. Table 10 is a list of partnership programs in 2004.

#### 4.2.5 Kanagawa Voluntary Activity Promotion Fund 21

In 2001, Kanagawa Prefecture Government set up the "Voluntary Activity Promotion Fund 21" and started three kinds of program; (1) Partnership share program,

**Table 10** Programs for Partnership between Voluntary Groups and Prefecture Organizations in 2004

	Purpose	Voluntary groups	Prefectural office (section)
1	Global Warming Prevention Campaign	Stop the Global Warming Network	Environment Planning
2	AIDS Cultural Forum Committee	AIDS Cultural Forum Committee	Health Prevention
3	Earth Festa Committee	Earth Festa Committee	International
4	Disaster-Relief Volunteer Center Support Team	Disaster-Relief Volunteer Center Support Team	Support Center
5	Program for Support of the Young Depressed Person	NPO Kusunoki Gakuen School	Juvenile Training Center
6	Tanzawa Oyama Volunteer Network	Tanzawa Oyama Volunteer Network	Natural Environment Preservation Center
7	Konawashiro Forest Preservation Promotion Program	Konawashiro Outdoor Activity Committee	Green Policy
8	"Partnership Committee"	NPO Study Group	Support Center
9	Agenda 21 Promotion Committee	New Agenda 21 Study Group	Environment Planning
10	Medical Interpreter Dispatch System	NPO Multiple Lingual Society Resource Kanagawa	International
11	New Agenda 21 Kanagawa Information Consultation Corner	NPO Kanagawa Agenda Promotion Center	Environment Planning
12	Kanagawa Global Environment Preservation Promotion Committee	NPO Kanagawa Agenda Promotion Center	Environment Planning
13	Agenda Monument Project Team Committee	Kanagawa Global Environment Preservation Committee	Environment Planning
14	Wild Animal Rehabiliator Certification System Committee	NPO Wild Animal Aid Veterinarian Association	Green Policy
15	Regional Cooperation Forum in Yokohama	Association for Future Social Welfare	Support Center
16	Social Welfare Support System and Disaster Volunteer Education	Disaster-Relief Volunteer Center Support Team	Support Center

Source: Kanagawa Voluntary Support Center (2005).

(2) Voluntary Activity Grant in Aid, (3) Voluntary Activity Promotion Prize. In order to select the voluntary organizations with equality and transparency, the Kanagawa prefecture set selection committee.

#### 4.2.6 Partnership with Sharing Fund Program<sup>16</sup>

Kanagawa Prefecture and voluntary organizations carry out partnership programs to bring the synergetic effect and provide the fund for the agenda necessary for local communities. Within the limit of 10 million yen, the prefecture provides

Table 11 Name of Program of 21 Partnerships with Sharing Fund

Name of Program	Voluntary Group	Section of Prefectural Office
Program for Support of the Young Depressed Person	NPO Kusunoki Gakuen School	Juvenile
Forest Preservation by Citizen	NPO Yokohama Forest Preservation Institute	Environment and Agriculture
Konawashiro Forest Preservation Promotion Program	Konawashiro Outdoor Activity Committee	Environment and Agriculture
Shelter for Women	NPO Women's Home, Sarah	Gender-Equality
Support for Crime and Disaster Victims	NPO Kanagawa Victim Support Center	Police for Victims
Medical Interpreter Dispatch System	NPO Multiple Lingual Society Resource Kanagawa	International
Treatment for Gamble Addicts	One Day Port	Health and Welfare, Life support and Consumer
Study for the Global Warming and Environmental Education	NPO Soft Energy Project	Environment and Agriculture Miura Rinkai High School Ebina High School
Educational Activity with Art	NPO ST Spot	Education
Wild Animal Rehabilitator Certification System Committee	NPO Wild Animal Aid Veterinarian Association	Environment and Agriculture
Recycling Illegally Dumped Tires	NPO Green Dam Kitasagami	Land and Water Resource Tsukui Prefectural Center
Multilingual Staff and Consultation	Kanagawa Foreign Resident Life Support Center	International

Source: Kanagawa Voluntary Support Center (2005).

fund and extends for five years at maximum for providing the fund. However, the selection committee should screen the program selected every year.

The selection committee, as of March 31, 2006, consists of seven persons chosen from the various fields including presidents of social welfare foundation, of NPO and university. In 2004, the number of the application for partnership is 35 cases and the number selected is 11 cases. In 2005, the number of the application for partnership is 37 and the number selected is 12 cases (see Table 11).

## 5. Conclusion

Since the enactment of NPO Law in 1998, the number of civil society organizations is constantly increasing in Japan. As shown in the case of Kanagawa Prefecture, activities of NPOs include key policy areas such as health care and social welfare, nutrition of youth, social education, community development, culture, arts and sport, environmental protection, and international cooperation. It suggests that some change might happen in governing Japan. More civic associations take part in

the delivery of public services, forming partnership with local government organizations. The representatives of the voluntary groups participate in the policy making process of the prefecture and municipal government. Looking back the history of civil society in Japan, it is unquestionable that the civil society is growing across the nation.

However, it seems too early for us to evaluate the transformation of public governance in Japan. It is not easy for citizens to establish and manage NPOs due to the weakness of financial foundations. Looking inside the voluntary organizations, majority members are senior citizens. Workers are difficult in participating in voluntary activities because of long working hours. Among the local governments, some support NPOs for the quality of welfare service; others welcome NPOs only to reduce public spending. Is Japan changing?

In this paper, we focus on the growth of civil society with close eyes on the development of non-profit organizations in Japan. The growth of NPOs is real. It is also real that the public bureaucracies have to collaborate with NPOs not only for the quality of public service but also for the citizen's trust on government. NPOs are expected to be good watchdogs. Evaluating performance of government from every angle, we need a variety of civil society organizations. For a long time, public bureaucracies have provided "one size fits all" public services due to the homogeneity of Japanese society. If the public sector failed in collaborating with the civil society, citizens will abandon cooperation with government to buy private services. The rise of civil society is a "silent revolution" in governing Japan.

#### Notes

- 1 The term of "civil society" ('shimin shakai' in Japanese) is popular in Japan, but the term of "civil society organizations" is not yet established. In recent years, people use the terms "NPOs" (Non-Profit Organizations) and "NGOs" (Non-Governmental Organizations) in the discussion of public affairs. In such debates, NPOs refer the organizations which focus on domestic issues, while NGOs are defined as any non-profit organizations without any relations with governmental entities in various countries, which engaged mainly in international cooperation (Wada 1999; Hirata 2002; Schwartz 2003).
- 2 Oil from a wrecked Russian tanker continued to wash ashore on the Sea of Japan coast on January 8, 1997, which had serious damage on the local environment and economy. At first, some 360 locales began removing oil has been washed up. The 13,157-ton *Nakhodka*, which was carrying heavy fuel oil from China to Russia, broke up January 2, 1997 in heavy seas. The bow section is estimated to have been carrying about 17,600 barrels of oil and more is expected to wash ashore over a large part of the coastal region, eventually reaching the Noto Peninsula in neighboring Ishikawa Prefecture (<http://search.japantimes.co.jp> retrieved on March 3, 2006).
- 3 The priest associations took some poor relief initiatives, too. In 1889, a priest association in Tsuruoka Town of Yamagata Prefecture provided lunch for poor school children in a voluntary basis. It was the beginning of school meals program in Japan (Koike 2005).
- 4 In 1897, a social reformer Sen Katayama launched the first "settlement movement" in Kanda, Tokyo.
- 5 The history of *chonaikai* is going back to the Edo period when the group of five became the one unit in the community. In the Meiji era, the structure of the group of five faded

- away as the central government built the basis of the nation. The basis of the group of five is tracing back to the five units of houses. One unit consisted of about twenty people and the total number of the five units was about one hundred. Under the US occupation, the *chonaikai* were order to be dissolved. US officials believed that keeping *chonaikai* system would become negative effect in occupational policy such as introducing individual voting right. However, as San Francisco Peace Treaty became effective in 1952, the system of *chonaikai* was revived and disseminated (Nakagawa 1980).
- 6 The government imposed to form every ten households as neighborhood associations for civil defense, mutual surveillance, distribution of rations, and extracting household savings and curbing consumption (Garon 2003).
  - 7 Protest movements in Minamata (Kumamoto) and Toyama triggered a nation-wide anti-pollution movements in the 1970s. Minamata disease caused from accused the methyl mercury poisoning. In Toyama, Itai-Itai disease (Ouch-Ouch disease) caused from the cadmium poisoning.
  - 8 Various types of organizations include (1) charitable organizations, (2) social welfare corporations, (3) private school corporations, (4) religious corporations, (5) medical corporations, (6) special public corporations, (7) charitable trusts, (8) cooperatives, (9) unincorporated organizations. (Amenomori 1997).
  - 9 In order to establish a non-profit organization, the Civil Code of 1896 required an endowment of ¥300 million (about \$3 million) and ¥30 million (about \$300,000) as an annual budget. Moreover, because of complex and rigid application process, the number of the charitable organizations is only 26,089, comparing with 1,140,000 of the United States in the mid 1990s (Schwartz 2003). On the other hand, the national bureaucracies established a number of "public interest corporations" that were affiliated with national ministries and those former bureaucrats became the managers in those corporations, which resulted in increased number of the unincorporated voluntary organizations (Yamamoto 1999).
  - 10 The reason why the LDP made the major shift over the bureaucratic supervision over the NPOs was that Kumashiro observed the NGO activities in Kobe and Rwanda. His idea reflected the LDP's view on the NPO Law.
  - 11 Basic themes of these amendments include elimination of the requirement of submitting a list of unpaid employees, and creation of a new category of NPOs for coordinating groups.
  - 12 Major legal development of NPO Law after the legislation of the NPO law in 1998 is as follows; (1) Law Amending in Part the Special Tax Measures Law approved, setting objectives criteria regarding eligibility of NPOs to receive tax-deductible donations in March 2001, (2) Mutual Benefit Nonprofits Law enacted giving legal status to these organizations in April, 2002, (3) Amendments made to the NPO Law and to the 2001 tax bill in December, 2002, (4) Proposal for legal reforms concerning public interest corporations announced in June 2003 (<http://www.jcie.or.jp/civilnet/monitor/8.html> retrieved on March 5, 2006).
  - 13 The number of the incorporated NPOs is calculated from the data from December 1, 1998 to December 31, 2006.
  - 14 The Cabinet certificates NPOs that work across the boundary of prefecture.
  - 15 The number of total of incorporated and not incorporated NPOs in Kanagawa Prefecture is 6,350. The organizations that support the international cooperation and foreign nationals account for about 15 percent of the activities (see Appendix B).
  - 16 Since this paper focuses on the partnership programs between the prefecture and voluntary organizations, it will focus on the partnership with sharing fund program.

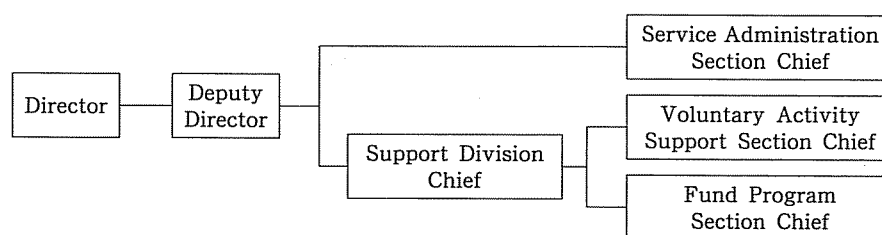
\* This project is partly sponsored by the JSPS Grants-in Aid for Scientific Research [Type B] 2005 "Comparative study on the diversity of public sector modernization in Asia-Pacific countries" (Core researcher, Osamu Koike).

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#### Appendix A: Structure of the Administration of the Kanagawa Voluntary Support Center



Source: Kanagawa Voluntary Support Center (2005).

Appendix B: The Number of the Voluntary Activities in Municipalities in Kanagawa Prefecture by Category as of November 30, 2005.

City Area*	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨	⑩	⑪	⑫	⑬	⑭	⑮	⑯	⑰	Total
Yokohama	1,261	351	294	252	104	182	108	18	42	83	12	27	1	11		9	67	2,822
Kawasaki	208	110	37	26	17	25	7	2	8	8	1	5					6	460
Yokosuka	74	32	31	17	5	23	3	2	1	6	3	1		1			6	205
Hiratsuka	122	31	40	48	4	23	22	7	10	13	7	2		5			6	340
Kamakura	56	41	48	20	11	26	14	1		3	1		1				6	228
Fujisawa	147	39	48	53	26	60	13	5	9	15	3	1	2	10	1		15	447
Odawara	43	21	24	15	2	10	4	1	2			1			1			124
Chigasaki	83	20	38	29	8	44	13		5	18		1	1	2			3	265
Zushi	16	7	15	5		3	4		1	3							4	58
Sagamihara	106	57	38	38	12	33	14	2	5	5	2	2	3	2		1	9	329
Miura	17	2	5	1	1	2	1	1				1						31
Hatano	51	21	17	7	1	9	5				1		1					113
Matsugi	56	11	11	10	4	7	1				1	1					3	105
Tamato	34	39	9	8	4	15		1	1	3	3	1					1	119
Sehara	21	10	9	7		3											1	51
Ybina	24	8	12	1		8	1	1	1						1			57
Yama	18	15	3	10		1	1		1	1			1				4	55
Minami-Ashigara	8	4	3	3		2		1										21
Yase	16	6	2			1	1				1	1						28
Yayama	17	5	5	3		4											1	35
Yamukawa	9	2							1									12
Yaso	7	5	4	3	1	2	2	2			1							27
Yinomiya	10	2	1	1		1												15
Yakai	1	1																2
Yi	3		1	1			1											6
Yatsuda	6			1		1												8
Yamakita	6			1		4				1							1	13
Yaisei	5	2	3			1	1										1	13
Yakone	8	1	2			3					1							15
Yanazuru	1	4	3		1	1	1			1							1	13
Yugawara	9	2	4	1			4				1							21
Yukawa		3	3		1	1	1					1						10
Yuyokawa	1	1																2
Yuiroyama	4		5	1			1				1						1	13
Yusui	11	2	3	2		2	2											22
Yagamiko	4		3	3														10
Yujino	3	1	4	1			1		1								1	12
Yuthers	81	40	26	25	9	11	6	1	9	11	4	6	1	1		1	11	243
Total	2,547	896	751	593	211	508	232	45	97	171	43	51	11	32	3	11	148	6,350

- ① Health and Welfare  
 ② International Cooperation and Foreign People Assistance  
 ③ Environment and Life  
 ④ Education  
 ⑤ Lifelong Learning  
 ⑥ Culture and Sport  
 ⑦ Community Development  
 ⑧ Consumer Protection  
 ⑨ Gender-Equality  
 ⑩ Human Rights and Peace  
 ⑪ Disaster Relief  
 ⑫ Capacity Building and Employment  
 ⑬ Community Safety  
 ⑭ Information Orientation  
 ⑮ Science and Technology  
 ⑯ Stimulating Economy  
 ⑰ NPO Assistance

Source: Kanagawa Voluntary Support Center (2006).