

# The NUFFS Times

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## Understanding Invisible Pain How to respond to help mark users

By Natsumi YAMADA

According to a survey conducted by Aichi Prefecture in 2020, 64.9% of Japanese citizens can recognize the help mark and understand its meaning. Representing a 31% increase since 2018, this figure is a result of governmental awareness campaigns, street awareness events, and public posters on transportation. The help mark's efficacy relies on high awareness rates. Gathering recognition from nearly two thirds of the population, the help mark initiative should be achieving its goals and making public transportation easier for people with invisible disabilities.

However, the remarks of help mark users themselves tell a different story. Mr. Kazuki Kuraoka, who has been voicing his opinions at the Mainichi Shimbun Newspaper, shared his experience using the help mark. "Since I began using the help mark in 2019, the number of people who offer their seats on public transportation has visibly increased." Mr. Kuraoka, who suffers an internal disability, shared this information. "Having said that, many people still pretend not to notice the help-mark." People avert their gaze, look at their phones, or close their eyes to rest, even though they may have seen the mark. One bus driver ignored the help-mark, doubting that Mr. Kuraoka uses a free transportation pass for the disabled.

Unsure whether his experiences were unique, Mr. Kuraoka contacted a help mark user group, where he learned that others were also having similar experiences. "I was astonished," Mr. Kuraoka said, "there is still a lot of work to do." Though he feels that more people are becoming aware of the mark, real-life experience tells a different story.

### Help-mark mannerisms

So how mindful should our society be when dealing with the help mark? When I see someone with a help mark, I am not sure what to do. I am unsure whether some people only want help if they are in trouble, whether they want to converse, or for everyone to remain quiet instead. Surely, many of us have encountered similar issues, and the preferences of each help-mark user may be unique. So, in public, what kind of assistance do help-mark users really desire?



Current help mark guidelines claim that, when you see someone with a help mark, you should:

- ① Offer your seat.
- ② Provide emergency evacuation support if needed.
- ③ Be mindful of others by, for example, speaking quietly.

However, Mr. Kuraoka has provided more detailed instructions. He suggested, "You can try to talk to help-mark users, asking 'Are you okay?'" While there are some users who prefer not to draw attention to themselves, conversation might help them become comfortable with communicating their health issues and joining help groups, instead of suffering in silence. Mr. Kuraoka himself says that it is difficult to speak out when he is in bad shape. "I wish more people had the courage to reach out and ask those with the help mark if they are okay."

### Toward a greater understanding

Admittedly, it takes a lot of courage to reach out to someone. What if they dislike being approached? What if we make things worse and end up ruining their day? Such things always come to my

mind. Mr. Kuraoka is not pressuring people to immediately muster up the courage to speak. Rather, he suggests that people begin by being

considerate, paying attention to their actions, and reaching out if and when they feel comfortable.

Mr. Kuraoka wants people to help increase not only public recognition, but also public understanding regarding the help mark. "When I look at the information posters inside the station and the stickers inside the train, I feel that they only 'notify' that the help mark exists, but fail to help us 'understand' what the help mark actually does" he says. For example, the posters often lack concreteness, leaving weak impressions and impacts on passersby. The current advertisements do not encourage action, but rather passivity. "To combat this ignorant passivity, I especially want the younger generation to know more about the health mark," Mr. Kuraoka shares, emphasizing that "young people are responsible for our future."

### Opening our hearts

The other day, when I boarded the train and looked around, most people were mindlessly staring at their phones with sullen faces.

With the rapid spread of information that accompanies the Internet, we have begun losing room in our hearts. When we are too busy



Top left: Help mark and disability certificate (photo: provided by Mr. Kuraoka)

Top right: Promotional poster by Aichi pref.

Left: Mr. Kazuki Kuraoka (left) and writer

focusing on our phone screens, we miss the important emotional connections that bind humanity together. Perhaps, just for a few moments when the train doors open and close, we can look up and look around. Doing so might create an environment where people are more sensitive to the existence of others in need.

It is true that the awareness of the help mark is increasing year by year. This awareness is indispensable. However society will be slow to change. But ultimately, once this change occurs, the taboo surrounding disabilities will dissipate, so that those who suffer in silence can receive the care they require. Perhaps we can take some time out of our day to consider those in need and be considerate to those who have less than us.

※**Help Mark:** In 2012, governments created a mark that aids people with invisible disabilities. The mark informs people that a person may require extra assistance or consideration. This includes people who use prosthetic legs or artificial joints, internal disorders or those who are in early pregnancy. One can receive the mark free of charge at a designated location in each municipality. One can also receive though a legal representative.



# Animal Welfare

## Put Yourself in Cats' Shoes -The need for empathy toward Japan's stray cats-

By Shota YAMAMOTO

“Many cats now grow up on concrete tetrapods that line Okinawa’s beaches. Due to the excess amounts of stray cats in certain port towns, these cats may find themselves lost at sea in rough weather.” Ms. K, who works to protect stray cats from undeserved slaughter, displacement, or dying on the roads, provided this shocking information.

“We often see stray cats get run over by cars. We also often find the dead, drowned bodies of cats around Okinawa.” Ms. K’s assistant, who came from Okinawa, continued. “In addition,” “residents of Amami island suspect that stray cats are responsible for killing endemic Amami rabbits, leading them to in the slaughter many stray cats.”

To improve the dreadful states of the stray cats in Okinawa, Ms. K and her assistant staff have founded a cat protection society called “Alice,” often holding sessions to find new owners for the stray cats from other protection facilities in Okinawa, such as O-ami Refuge. Fortunately, with many people alone at home during COVID-19, the demand for pet cats has increased, meaning that more cats under Alice’s protection could find foster parents. “I want people to be aware of the terrible situations that stray cats in Okinawa are currently facing, so that they are more willing to help out, and adopt a cat,” shared Ms. K.

On the other hand, Ms. K also mentioned that “Inadequate staff and the difficulty of transporting cats from Okinawa make our activities quite hard.” Protecting cats and hosting adoption sessions is no simple work. In particular, the operations required for adoption, castration operations and disease treatments, make Alice’s work very costly. Volunteer societies, like Alice and *Fukuneko-no-sato*, bear these costs by themselves. If they cannot fully afford to pay, then some of the cats protected by the facilities must return to their previous, dreadful lives.

Of course, even if volunteer societies can prepare cats for adoption, finding foster families is not necessarily the be-all-end-all solution to Japan’s stray cat problem. Mayumi Takasu, an avid cat protector who has picked up over 20 stray cats from her yard, describes this reality. To be good owners, we have to keep a lot in mind, even after letting stray cats into our houses. While we might eagerly pick up cats because we want to take care of them, we are not looking into the future, or thinking about the incredible amount of time and money needed to feed them and take care



Top: An adoption the session by the cat protection society, Alice (photo provided by Alice)  
Above: Photos from the Instagram of Alice  
Below: Mačka, a stray cat adopted by Ms. Midori, it's the meaning of the cat in Croatian.



of them. To prevent this issue, we must ensure that we are ready to take care of the cat until they die or not. In addition, gaining the consent of families or neighbors is important before spontaneously inviting a new animal into one’s household.

With adoption not being as simple a solution as one originally assumes, Mrs. Mayumi alerted that “we must think much more intensively about the problems that stray cats are facing today. We have to put ourselves in the position of the

vulnerable cats. When we offer to help poor cats, feeding them or welcoming them into our house, we must carefully think about how our actions will not only affect the present, but also the future condition of Japan’s stray cats.” This empathy and foresight – not just sympathy – is an important key to protecting stray cats from our carelessness.

Additionally, the “kawai sou” or “cute” mindset towards cats, Mayumi tell us, can make it increasingly difficult to decrease the population of stray cats. *Fukuneko-no-sato*, who protects stray cats in Aichi, noted that “Feeding the stray cats just because they are cute makes the population rise. If you want to be able to feed them, you also have to give them a castration operation.”

Midori, a lady who recently adopted a stray cat, suggests: “The problem is that the activities of individual people or facilities are not sufficient enough to solve such a large issue.” A large-scale systematic approach might be a better solution. Aichi Animal Welfare Centre (AAWC), for instance, operates under the Aichi prefectural government. To ease adoption, the centre acts as a mediator between cat-protection facilities and foster families. It also engages in treating stray cats, encouraging kindness to animals, and educating people about adopting new animals. Primarily, the centre focuses on controlling stray cats in the street, claiming: “While finding foster families is important, managing the population of cats in the streets is a fundamental step that can combat Japan’s stray cat crisis.”

In addition to the AAWC, animal rescue facilities also help cat protection centre’s find new families for cats in need, resulting in higher rates of responsible adopting. The rescue facilities try to educate the public on proper mannerisms for dealing with stray cats. One staff in the center said, “Public institutions for pets need people to stop light heartedly feeding cats. And if, by chance, you do feed them, you have to make sure that you continue taking care of them until they pass away.” This way of thinking that the centre has been promoting is now called “lifelong-feeding” or “proper-feeding.”

Ms. K always conducts intensive surveys to those who came to her sessions to confirm that host families really can look after their new family member. This vigilance comes from her empathy for the future of Japan’s stray cats, not from mere sympathy. If people lack this empathy, they will abandon their cats as soon as they became bored or sick of having them. To unlock the full potential of the public institutions combatting the stray cat crisis, we must put ourselves in stray cats’ shoes.



# Sewing an Ethical Economy

## Combatting low consumer awareness of Fairtrade

By Utana MIZUNO

Helping small-scale farmers in developing countries, protecting local communities, and combating environmental degradation, fair trade makes for a more equitable global economy. Before the fair trade system began, farmers had increasing troubles receiving fair compensation. Now, the initiative helps farmers avoid issues regarding overwork, child labor and low wages. By purchasing fair trade products, we can support farmers' lives in developing countries and help the fair trade initiative realize a more sustainable world.

Fairtrade also sets standards for producing safe and high-quality products. Avoiding the use of agrichemicals, fair trade produce is both eco-friendly and healthy. To those who have negative reactions to pesticides, fair trade products are a healthy, organic alternative. The fair trade initiative, in other words, considers both the producer and consumer throughout its product development process.

In an interview, Mr. Kouhei Miyakawa, an FTNN (Fairtrade Nagoya Network) representative and associate professor at NUFS, expressed that one of the major problems affecting Fairtrade is poor awareness. Mr. Miyakawa's concern regarding fair trade comes from his role as a representative for FTNN. FTNN seeks to popularize fair trade and maintain Nagoya city's status as a "fair trade town." The status updates every 3 years, with new towns dropping in and out each cycle. Current fair trade cities in Japan include Sapporo in Hokkaido, Hamamatsu in Shizuoka, Zu in Kanagawa, and more.

According to a 2019 survey from FTFJ (Fairtrade Forum Japan), the awareness of fair trade is 32.8%. Surveys of fair trade towns tell us that awareness rates rise to 40 or 50% in metropolises. Indeed, fair trade awareness rates have greatly increased since the foundation of Fairtrade Japan in 1993. Nonetheless, in comparison to the United States' 59% awareness rate, Japan's 32.8% points towards a large gap of untapped market potential.

### Reasons for lack of awareness

The struggle to raise fair trade brand awareness arises from a lack of supply. While the amount of fair trade coffee has increased, it still remains small compared to the coffee from large commercial farms. This means that fair trade products become lost in the shelves of supermarkets, behind a sea of other brands. Moreover, because they are seasonal, fair trade products may



Top: A clerk from who talked about fair-trade coffee beans.

Middle: Organic cotton traditionally dyed by Arimatsu-Shibori.

Above: Chocolate goods

disappear from store shelves for periods at a time. Competing products, however, are available year-round. Fairtrade chocolate, for example, begins making sales in October, finishing by May or June. A lack of product, shelf space, and seasonal limitations collectively hamper the fair trade initiatives' efforts to compete with big-name brands and boost their own brand awareness.

Recently, keywords such as "Organic" and "Ethical" have come into fashion, and "Fairtrade" gradually finds itself buried in the global

race. It is, indeed, important for consumers to have more choices. Competition can also encourage the fair trade initiative to further improve its products and ethics. However, fair trade also distinguishes from other labels, in that it is not simply about "organic" and "ethical" products, but also an equitable economy. The elision of this important distinction in the wake of our global 'organic' craze would damage the local communities that fair trade supports.

### Boosting Brand Awareness

To increase awareness rates regarding fair trade, FTNN tries to maintain Nagoya's status as a Fairtrade town and creates brochures that promote the fair trade community. FTNN also introduces new companies to fair trade products in order to increase consumer product exposure. Recently, because of COVID-19, they have developed an online store where consumers can browse and buy the products online.

### Potential to create cross-generational awareness

Schools have become another means of marketing for initiatives like FTNN. During fair trade month, which is May, FTNN collaborates with local schools to host lunches. The purpose of the lunch is to teach children about fair trade. Many schools will succinctly introduce and explain school lunches before students begin eating, so children can understand the signifi-

cance of their meals. If children can not only learn about, but also experience fair trade products, they can spread awareness to their family. Bringing information home, students have the potential to create cross-generational awareness towards fair trade products.

A clerk at one of Nagoya's local fair trade shops shared that companies have been ordering fair trade products as gifts to other businesses. Recently, a company had ordered Fairtrade products for *ochūgen*, a customary mid-year gift in Japan. This trend of gift-buying, the clerk described, is the angle from which organizations should advertise fair trade products. Gift giving creates a self-promoting spiral – both the company that sends and receives the gift become exposed to the fair trade brand, increasing the likelihood and volume of future sales.

The shop clerk succinctly captured the unique experience of fair trade in one sentence: "we can feel the warmth from Fairtrade products." We can feel this warmth in the careful and safe selection of harmful substances such as pesticides. We can feel it in the ethical production processes, and the communities that we support with each purchase. As global citizens, the shop clerk explains, our duty extends past the simple purchasing of fair trade products. Through raising awareness, we must pass on the warmth of fair trade to others. In our communities, we must sew the warmth of an equitable and ethical global economy.



# Freedom of Marriage

## “A Chance” Fighting for LGBTQ+ with Buddhism and SNS

By Shiori KASUGAI

Walking by the gates of *Sai-myouji*, a temple in Kawagoe city, Saitama pref, one might witness two men, or two women, walking hand in hand to a traditional Buddhist wedding. Available to same-sex couples, these weddings mark a shift in Japan’s public attitude towards the LGBTQ+ community. In recent years, religious institutions and social organizations, like *Sai-myouji* temple, have been fighting for a Japan where “same-sex marriage” is possible.

On March 17, 2021, the Sapporo district court judge ruled that “It is unconstitutional to not legally permit same-sex marriage.” Doing so, the court claims, violates Article 14 of the constitution, which promises “equality under the law.” This long-awaited ruling has brought tears and shouts of joy to LGBTQ+ communities across the country.

The ruling from the Sapporo court follows a six-year trend of “partnership systems.” Implemented by local governments, these systems grant same-sex couples certain privileges that married couples enjoy, while also symbolically recognizing LGBTQ+ relationships. Since Sapporo implemented this system in 2017, more than 100 cities across Japan have followed suit.

As the only country in the G7 to not have permitted same-sex marriage, Japan’s LGBTQ+ initiatives are playing catch up with the rest of the world. How are Japanese citizens advocating for LGBTQ+ rights?

### SNS Movement

When it comes to social movements, nothing beats the ubiquitous influence of social media. PALETTALK, an organization that discusses LGBTQ+ and feminist issues online, uses SNS's potential to fuel Japan's LGBTQ+ movement. PALETTALK describes itself as creating "media that deciphers the haziness of sexuality through manga." The combination of manga's visual layout and SNS' connectivity allows PALETTALK to distribute bite-size, yet salient, panels of LGBTQ+ news to Japanese society. Through these panels, the organization hopes to alter public sentiment regarding LGBTQ+ people.

To spread awareness, PALETTALK also hosts discussion groups. Discussion helps people empathize with the importance and gravity of LGBTQ+ struggles. Facilitating empathy and social interaction, PALETTALK creates informed allies who can further support sexual minorities.



Above: An LGBTQ+ couple who are active YouTubers under the name “PIGLETS”. Wearing Black kimono’s person (left) is Nana-san and Momo-san.

left: A wedding ceremony in Saimyouji temple.

Photos: Provided by Saimyouji temple

### Buddhist Movement

Uniting with the modern force of social media, a traditional Buddhist temple, *Saimyouji*, has been advocating for LGBTQ+ rights by hosting wedding ceremonies for same-sex couples. The chief priest of *Saimyouji*, Senda Myoukan, began hosting same-sex weddings on May 1st, 2020, the same day that Kawasaki city implemented its own partnership system.

Last year, two same-sex couples held Buddhist wedding ceremonies at *Saimyouji*. The participants expressed surprise that they could hold a wedding at a temple. “We feel overjoyed to have Buddhism recognize our love,” shared one of the married couples.

When deciding to host LGBTQ+ weddings, Myoukan was not thinking about the recent ruling, or jumping through legal hoops. “In Japan, we should care about the separation of church and state,” he maintains. “People must protect the right to the freedom of religion.”

Hence, Myoukan does not mention the law or constitution in his discussion of LGBTQ+ weddings. Rather, Myoukan takes advantage of the separation of church and state, using it to help sexual minorities enjoy a normal life.

Myoukan found the inspiration to host LGBTQ+ weddings while studying Buddhism in India. “I was influenced by India's diversity,” he describes.

“In Japan, people like to conform to the dominant train of thought, but in India, people accept diverse ideas and opinions.” India's multinational diversity, in other words, turned *Saimyouji*, a traditional temple founded in the Kamakura period, into a temple that is reinventing tradition.

People may think that hosting same-sex wedding ceremonies at Buddhist temples is revolutionary. “However,” Myoukan says, “Buddhist philosophy has been prepared to host LGBTQ+ weddings for centuries.” Buddhism states that “All people are equal.” In other words, no Buddhist scripture forbids same-sex marriage. Rather, Buddhist teachings harmonize with

different ways of living. To show their world-wide support for LGBTQ+ communities, all of Japan's Buddhist temples now boast rainbow stickers.

### A Chance

“This is all about a chance,” shares Myoukan, “The chance to create a better society. When the word ‘LGBT’ became popular in Japan, I realized that Buddhist temples can support living people. We tend to think that temples are only places for the deceased, but LGBTQ+ wedding ceremonies are one way that temples can improve the lives of modern Japanese citizens.”

PALETTALK recognized a similar chance. “People mindlessly use SNS every day,” claims the organization's CEO. Using publicity and advertising on SNS, the CEO decided to share information about LGBTQ+ issues. This was a chance. A chance to turn mindless scrolling into an educational experience, combating the ignorance that fuels LGBTQ+ discrimination.

Myoukan claimed, “I hope the recent ruling will fuel the change for a better system in Japan.” This change, however, will only happen if citizens carry on the legacy of *Sai-myouji* and PALETALK, taking advantage of the chance for equality and love.



# Breathing Life into Drawing

## Shaping the future of Japanese anime

By Tamaki SENO

Anime has been attracting a new wave of viewers during COVID-19. Recently, Japanese anime such as Demon Slayer and Jujutsu Kaisen have been breaking the charts for box office revenue. Demon Slayer alone amassed 40 billion yen in box office sales within 23 days of its release in April. The new quarantine-lifestyle that accompanies COVID-19 has translated into a mass of viewers and money for Anime, an industry that had been booming even before the pandemic struck.

This boom of sales and revenue has begun creating a new style of anime, one that can afford to use cutting-edge technology, attracting people with vivid animation. Japanese anime is ascending to a new tier of quality and skill. I interviewed Kenichi Kutsuna to discuss how Japanese anime will continue to develop after COVID-19. Kutsuna has created original illustrations for the recently released Jujutsu Kaisen, and has also worked with Hayao Miyazaki, the co-founder of Studio Ghibli.



Above: A collage of popular anime.  
Collage: by Tamaki SENO

**Q:** Have you noticed an increase in demand for the Anime industry?

**A:** Yes. The demand for anime is increasing rapidly. COVID-19 has resulted in a situation of especially high demand. Online video streaming services, like Netflix and Prime Video, have been taking off. Many anime are exclusively released on these sites, resulting in a higher rate of paying viewers. (More than 40 titles have been exclusively released on Netflix alone.) Animators have more work on their hands than they ever did before COVID-19.

**Q:** How do you expect the demand for Japanese animation to change in the future?

**A:** I think that online streaming services like Netflix will continue developing, making Japanese anime more accessible to the globe. Also, I expect that viewers will demand more variety from the Japanese industry. One of the reasons for Japanese anime's historical success is its variety. Japanese anime has created shows for adults and children alike, undercutting competition from companies like Disney, which cater only to children. As Japanese anime grows in demand, the variety of work will naturally increase to retain new viewers.

**Q:** What do you keep in mind as an animator?

**A:** I always feel a movement in my drawings, as if they were a flipbook. This is my origin. Although anima-

tors tend to work mechanically and focus on efficiency, I pay attention to the life that exists in each illustration. Indeed, animation requires a huge number of drawings, so it is hard work. But I want people to know that anime illustration is not only about grueling efficiency – it is also exciting, and kinetic. A drawing is only a picture, but when a drawing comes to completion, and gathers with other drawings, it moves like it is alive. This is inspiring.

**Q:** What messages do you want to share with Japan and the world through anime?

**A:** First and foremost, I want to share realizations and discoveries that will make the world a better place. I think this is the minimum standard we should expect of all anime creators.

One of the wonderful features of Japanese anime is that anime creators can freely explore their own personal aesthetic and share it with the world. Where American animators are often constricted by political propriety or religion, Japanese animators can develop their own aesthetics and opinions free from such restrictions. And foreigners are attracted to this “freedom of intellect” in Japanese anime. It is partly why Japanese anime has established such unique visual presentations. In the future, creators will continue to pursue beauty

and novelty, releasing enlightening, innovational anime into society.

**Q:** What do you keep in mind when you create an animation that expresses social issues?

**A:** I try to develop anime in such a way that its main message or social issue sticks in viewers' minds. Recently, animators have been focusing more on attracting people visually, and less on impactfully conveying social messages to the world. To some viewers, who are attracted to the intense battles and beautiful girls of anime, an emphasis on visual effects makes sense. However, using animation styles that overwhelm people visually is not enough to intellectually rouse viewers' minds. People will forget the anime's message the day after they watch it.

In order to convey social messages that leave lasting impressions on viewers, I work hard to camouflage and disguise social themes so that they are recognizable, but not overwhelmingly apparent. This way, viewers can naturally pick apart social themes within the plot, while also enjoying the anime for its entertainment value. Refusing to spoon-feed ideas and messages to viewers forces them to actively analyze what they watch. This active engagement from viewers makes the anime's message difficult to forget. In other words, to make anime enjoyable and intellectually engaging, animators must avoid preaching to their audiences, seeking engagement from them instead.

**Q:** What is one message that you want to share with other animators?

**A:** Please bring back animation styles similar to that of Studio Ghibli. Old anime, like Studio Ghibli, and late anime are fundamentally different. The latest anime is based on visualism, which privileges visual perception, and old anime is based on pictorialism, which focuses on subject matter and composition. Many of today's anime stimulate the visual and auditory senses – they emerge as bright, vivid splashes in the entertainment industry, and then quickly disappear. But anime as picturesque as Studio Ghibli's Spirited Away can move people and stay in their hearts for a long time.

When I create anime, I create it with passion, investing every ounce of my being into

my work. I want animators to not forget that drawing is alive, and that it can convey important messages. I want them to believe in the power of drawings. This kind of animator will make works that last forever.



Photo (Above): Kenichi KUTSUNA

**Kenichi Kutsuna:** When he was a college student, he created original illustrations for famous anime including Fullmetal Alchemist and GOD GUARD. After this, he began succeeding as an animator, animation director, and character designer. His major works include Naruto and Naruto Shippuden, *Crayon Shin-chan*, *Mr. Osomatsu* and *Gurren Lagan*. In addition, he also created illustrations for Hayao Miyazaki's works, Bread Seeds and Princess Tamago. As animation director and character designer, he directed the original video animation of *Hori-san to Miyamura-kun*. He has also been member of MARZA ANIMATION PLANET INC. since 2015 and is an animation teacher at Nagoya University of Art and Sciences.



# Redefining Forest Renewability

## The fight for British Columbia’s old growth forests

By Jacob TEICHRIB

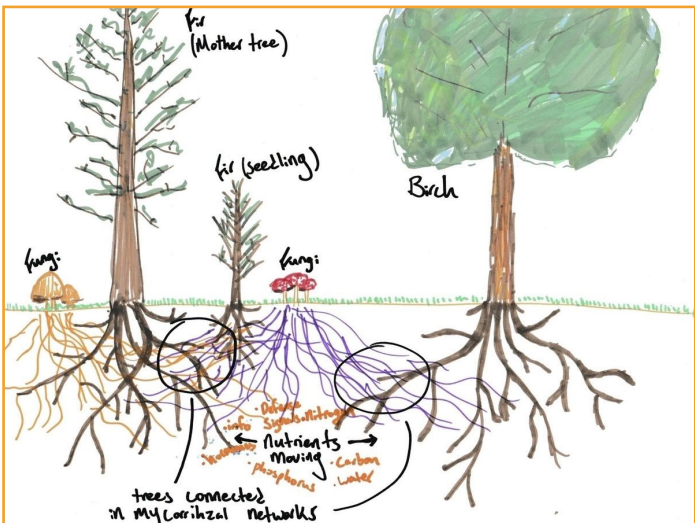
In August 2020, protesters set up camp in British Columbia’s Fairy Creek watershed. The protesters began blocking access to the area upon hearing that Teal-Jones, a Canadian timber harvesting and lumber manufacturing company, had been building roads to access the site for logging. Protestors were particularly concerned about the old growth trees in the Fairy Creek watershed. Generally referring to extremely old trees, old growth can range anywhere from 140 to over one thousand years old. The loss of old growth is concerning because it means the loss of the unique historical, spiritual, and ecological value associated with large trees. It also, amongst other things, means the loss of unique structures and habitats that support wildlife.

The protests in Ferry Creek watershed exploded in the media when, on April 1st, the B.C. Supreme Court issued an injunction banning roadblocks in the area. Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) began enforcing the court injunction on May 17th, arresting hundreds of protesters. In retaliation, activists called for public support on social media, and more protesters flooded into the watershed. Their efforts, alongside requests from the Pacheedaht, Ditidaht, and Huu-ay-aht First Nations, led to the deferral of old-growth harvesting in the Fairy Creek watershed and central Walbran areas, located in the south-west side of British Columbia’s Vancouver Island.

### A Game of Numbers

Though the deferrals mark a hard-fought win for protesters and certain First Nations tribes, it is a miniscule victory in a vast battle over British Columbia’s old growth forests. Government data estimates that there exists around 13.7 million hectares of old growth forest in British Columbia. 10 million of these hectares are either protected or not economical to harvest, leaving 3.7 million open to harvest. Covering nearly two thousand hectares, the Fairy Creek and Walbran deferrals represent a small fraction of this harvestable area.

Current debate regarding old growth harvesting questions the sustainability of British Columbia’s harvesting rates and practices. The debate has intensely exploded in global media, descending into a back-and-forth game of conflicting statistics. In an address to the University of British Columbia’s (UBC) forestry community, former Dean of Forestry, John Innes, describes media coverage as having “a great deal of obfuscation, to the extent that the facts are quite difficult to ascer-



Left: Old growth trees in British Columbia. Image by Jakob Dulisse

Above: Illustration of forest and mycorrhizal networks. Courtesy of NPR (National Public Radio).

tain.” “The truth is,” Innes writes, “there has been no complete survey of old-growth in British Columbia. ... More reliable estimates of the area of mature and old stands can be gained from the Provincial Site Productivity Layer, but this also has serious shortcomings.”

### Defining Renewability

Instead of dredging through datasets, and discrediting claims on either side of the old-growth debate, let us approach the issue from a different angle: how the forestry industry defines deforestation and renewability.

In response to a 2014 report from the World Resource Institute (WRI), which listed Canada as second in terms of global tree cover loss, the Canadian Institute of Forestry (CIF) published a media release disputing the WRI’s definition of forest cover loss. In its report, the WRI had illustrated that wildfires and forestry contribute to 99% of tree loss across Canada. Of this, wildfires account for 59%, and forestry for 40%. The CIF refuted the WRI’s suggestion that logging, and wildfires constitute deforestation, defining deforestation as the “permanent removal of forest cover in an area, and the conversion of previously forested land to another use, such as agriculture or urban development. Timber harvesting and natural disturbances such as fire[s] ... cause forest cover change, but none of these changes constitute deforestation, because the cover is renewed either by replanting or natural generation.” In other words, deforestation does not apply to situations where forest cover can naturally regenerate or be replanted.

In contrast to the CIF’s claims, research by Dr. Suzanne Simard, a forestry professor at the University of British Columbia, suggests that we cannot simply chalk down forest renewability to replanting and natural generation. In her 2016 TED talk, “How trees talk to each other,”

Dr. Simard shared her discovery that trees communicate and support each other through mycorrhizal networks, hundred-kilometre-long webs of mycelium that connect trees and plant life beneath the forest floor. “Forests aren’t simply collections of trees,” shares Dr. Simard, “they’re complex systems with hubs and networks that overlap and connect trees and allow them to communicate, and they provide avenues for feedbacks and adaptation, and this makes the forest resilient.” The networked interdependency of forests disrupts the traditional idea of forest renewability – forests are much more than disconnected collections of trees that can be cut down and replanted without consequence.

Within these networks, Dr. Simard describes something called hub trees, or “mother trees,” which have the largest number of connections with the surrounding forest and promote forest growth by sharing nutrients. The existence of these mother trees, which tend to be old-growth, disrupts the traditional idea of forest-renewability. “You see,” Dr. Simard explains, “you can take out one or two hub trees, but there comes a tipping point, because hub trees are not unlike rivets in an airplane. You can take out one or two and the plane still flies, but you take out one too many, or maybe that one holding on the wings, and the whole system collapses.” This discovery disrupts the CIF’s assumption that replanting completely negates deforestation and its risks. Harvesting can exert irreversible damage on the mycorrhizal networks that are essential to forest regeneration, permanently altering the condition and diversity of British Columbia’s unique forests.

### Striking a Balance

Protesters are currently fighting for a complete halt to old growth logging in British Columbia. However, behind the need to protect

Canada’s old growth forests also exists local and global populations that rely on Canada’s lumber. According to the province of British Columbia, around 200 000 hectares of forest are harvested every year, 27% of which comes from old growth. In a public statement, UBC Dean of Forestry, Dr. John Innes, claimed that “stopping that harvest immediately would cause major hardship for many individuals, communities, and companies.” Japan, which relies 60% on imports for its lumber supply, also needs Canada’s forestry industry. In fact, due to strikes and other disturbances, Canada has already failed to provide Japan with the lumber it promised under the Trans-Pacific Partnership. Indeed, an abrupt halt to old-growth logging could cause more problems than it solves.

To avoid shocking local and global communities, we need to follow Dr. Garry Merkel and Al Gorley’s suggestion for a transition period in their Old Growth Strategy Review. Referencing this transition period, Dr. Innes says: “That would mean continued cutting of old-growth, but this could be directed away from the areas most in need of conservation, potentially reducing (but not eliminating) the impacts.”

On the other hand, in a Q&A with British Columbia Premier, John Horgan, Greg Rasmussen of CBC asked: “The end game here is for the halt of old growth logging in British Columbia; it’s a finite resource. What year will old growth logging end in British Columbia?” While a transition period is indeed important for Canada and the globe, many recognize that there must be an eventual cut off point for old growth logging. Ultimately, trees that range from 140 to over 1000 years old are not trees that we can simply replant. Old growth gives lodging to centuries of ecological, historical, and spiritual value, value that will only be lost as harvesting continues.



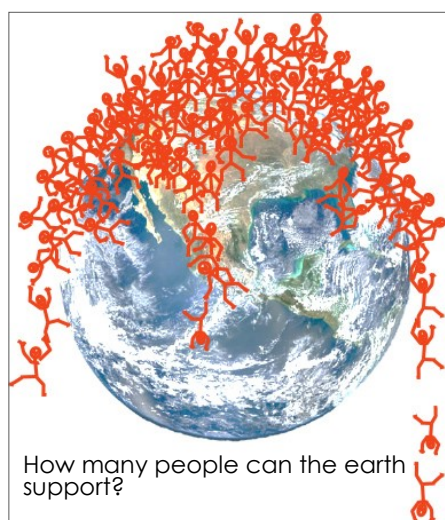


# Japan and Demographic Change

## The invisible elephant in the room

By Michael HEALEY,  
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Japan has a low birth rate, and its population is declining. The government views this situation with alarm, since the low birth rate will lead to a smaller workforce and reduced tax revenues while numbers of elderly who need pensions and health care will grow, potentially overwhelming the economy. Efim Shilin and co-authors explored some potential consequences of Japan's low birth rate in the December 2019 edition of the NUFSTimes.



Japan is not alone in experiencing a low birth rate. Eighty-nine countries have birth rates below replacement, some even lower than Japan. Birth rate is declining in virtually all countries and global average birth rate is projected to fall below replacement before mid-century. Low birth rates frighten governments because they are all locked into a paradigm of increasing population, increasing labour force, and increasing economic growth. This paradigm is unsustainable but very difficult to break out of. Although the transition to a smaller population will be disruptive and perhaps painful for some, there are many positives that go with a smaller human population. An analysis by Ronald Lee and colleagues (1) suggests that declining population will not necessarily lead to economic decline. Most importantly, if we make good decisions about managing the decline, the end result will be a population and a planet that is healthier, more

secure, more resilient to social and environmental shocks, and, hopefully, more equitable.

With a population of 7.9 billion, the earth is seriously overpopulated (Fig.1). Ecological Footprint Analysis (2) shows that the human population consumes each year the resource productivity of 1.7 earths. The presence of so many people demanding so much of the earth is eroding its very capacity to support human and other forms of life. Because of human overconsumption, earth is experiencing its 6th great extinction and is on a path toward irreversible climate change. Yet, human demands on the earth do not provide a good life for everyone. Because of social and economic inequality, billions of humans experience only a subsistence existence. To provide everyone living today with a Japanese standard of living would require the productive capacity of 2.3 planet earths. Since extra planet earths are not available right now, the human population must be brought down to an abundance that does not overuse the annual production of earth. It is past time we implemented effective policies to achieve a sustainable population small enough that earth's biocapacity is maintained yet large enough to foster productive social and cultural diversity. To make this transition smoothly and without severe social and economic disruption will require that governments adopt a socio-economic-environmental paradigm that prioritizes sustainability rather than growth, and take bold corrective action.

But what sustainable population should be our goal, and how are we to achieve it? The fact that scientists and philosophers have debated these questions for centuries without consensus demonstrates how difficult the questions are. It has been politically simpler just to let people make their own decisions about procreation and deal with problems as they arise. But this is the thinking that led to all the problems of overpopulation (over utilization of land and other resources, food insecurity, famine, pandemic, global pollution, high rate of species extinction, etc.) and now to the problems of population decline. It is also worth noting that

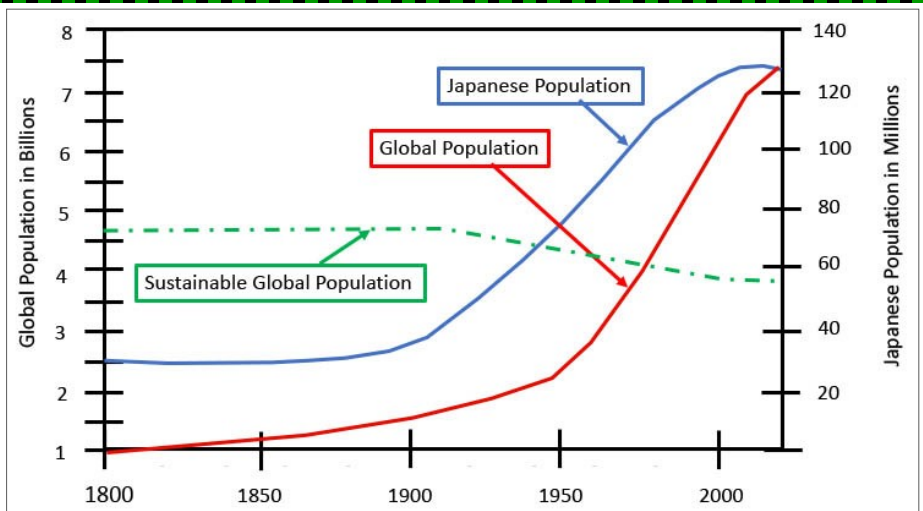


Fig.1: Growth of the global (billions) and Japanese (millions) populations since 1800. Also shown the global sustainable population (billions) based on various sources.

overpopulation is a relatively recent issue associated with and perhaps driven by the industrial revolution. In the centuries prior to the industrial revolution, human population grew hardly at all. During the whole of the *Edo* period in Japan, for example, population was stable at around 30 million. Since Japan was closed to the outside world during the *Edo* period, 30 million was, presumably, the sustainable population Japan's internal resource base could support. Japan's population only began to grow with the reforms of the *Meiji* Restoration.

It seems self-evident that a sustainable global human population should not exceed the biocapacity of the earth. However, biocapacity is consumed not only by each person satisfying his/her basic needs, but also by his/her consumption of the incredible array of non-essential goods and services that define his/her lifestyle, and by the resource needs of non-human species (biodiversity). Defining the sustainable human population at which we should aim, therefore, involves choices and trade-offs: more people consuming fewer resources or high resource consumption and fewer people; fewer people and more space for nature and other species, or more people and less biodiversity. These are difficult and contentious decisions requiring a lot of public debate. It seems doubtful there would ever be a global consensus. In the short term, however, because of overpopulation and high consumption, getting population and consumption down to a level that biocapacity can support is job one. As women and families are

opting for lower birth rates on their own, convincing women to have fewer children is not a problem in most countries. Where birth rates are still high, an emphasis on family planning, on ensuring that contraception is freely available, and on ensuring that girls and women have access to education are probably sufficient.

Of more immediate concern for Japan will be dealing with the short-term socio-economic consequences of a low birth rate. Prominent among these is the declining labour force coupled with increasing numbers of elderly people. Japan is already implementing measures to adapt its economy and its workforce to its changing demographic reality – encouraging more women in the workforce; implementing greater flexibility in employment, including retention of workers past current retirement age; making greater use of AI and robotics. However, more and more vigorous adaptation in these and other areas is needed to ensure that Japan can sustain its economic productivity as its workforce declines. Ultimately, as Japan approaches its sustainable population, policies that will stabilize the population will be needed. But Japan has decades to plan for this eventuality and, for now, it should only celebrate its low birth rate.

### Notes:

(1) Lee, Robert, et al. 2014. Is Low Fertility Really a Problem? Population Aging, Dependency, and Consumption. *Science* 346 (6206): 229–234

(2) Global Footprint Network, <https://www.footprintnetwork.org/our-work/ecological-footprint/>



# A Modern Commitment for Happiness

## Innovating Japan’s “kodomo-shokudō” in Covid-19

By Ayana HAGINO

As child poverty grows worse in Japan, *kodomo-shokudō*, cafeterias that provide impoverished children with food, are gathering attention. *Kodomo-shokudō* are community centres where local residents and governments provide food to children for free or at very low rates. *Tsunasho* and *Honwaka-shokudō*, two children's cafeterias in Nagoya City, Aichi pref, once provided meals for many people before COVID-19. However, the pandemic has inhibited their ability to work at full capacity, resulting in new, innovational activities for feeding low-income families.

Mrs. Mayuko Nakamura first felt inspired to found *Tsunasho*, a *kodomo-shokudō* (children's cafeteria) in Nagoya City, during her long workdays at a children's shelter. An 18-year-old girl, Yumi Yokoyama, had written a hopeful message on the shelter's blackboard: "I want to take a bath. And I want a slumber party." Mrs. Nakamura recognized the reality behind these simple and innocent words – a reality of unmet needs and exclusion from social interaction. After reading this message, Mrs. Nakamura resolved to improve the wellbeing and happiness of Japan's struggling children.

It is estimated that about one in seven children in Japan are currently living in poverty. In response, at least 100 *kodomo-shokudō*, including *Tsunasho*, have opened in Aichi prefecture over the past three years. The centres have gained recognition as a safe refuge for local children. Behind each centre resides an army of workers just as passionate and open-hearted as Mrs. Nakamura.

"I could not continue living without making the children around me happy," claims Mrs. Nakamura. It is this resolve that has contributed to *Tsunasho's* success as one of Japan's many *kodomo-shokudō*. The center has 13 staff, 11 of which are high school students. An average of 38 people arrive every day to receive food. The staff support a variety of customers, from children to adults. In addition to washing dishes, talking with children, and distributing food, staff will sometimes provide daily essentials to adults living in cheap housing.

*Tsunasho* relies on food donations from the foodbank and the community. Using these supplies, Mrs. Nakamura is determined to never let anyone go home hungry.



Top: Volunteers distributing food in *Honwaka-shokudō*, Nagoya city, Aichi prefecture.  
Above: A candy store in *Tsunasho*, Nagoya city, Aichi prefecture.

*Tsunasho* employs a buffet system, where houseworkers prepare a variety of dishes, allowing people to eat as much as they need. Set at 100 yen for children and 500 for adults, the entrance fee offers its buffet at an affordable price. Further, even if the buffet runs out of food, Mrs. Nakamura quickly prepares more dishes to ensure that everyone can eat.

Many of the people seeking help from *Tsunasho* have invisible struggles that extend beyond poverty and food. To address such struggles, Mrs. Nakamura and her staff must maintain high levels of empathy. Mrs. Nakamura recalls a case where an elementary school student once stole snacks from *Tsunasho*. When the staff talked with the child, they discovered that, in addition to a lack of food, the child had also been suffering from parental abuse. Instead of scolding the child for stealing, Mrs. Nakamura decided to comfort their pain by offering more snacks. This exemplifies *Tsunasho's* larger purpose: empathizing and connecting with participants' unique struggles to understand the deeper story behind

their actions.

The COVID-19 pandemic has proved exceptionally difficult for an organization like *Tsunasho*, which relies heavily on interpersonal connection. Since participants must adhere to social distancing during COVID-19,

*Tsunasho* can no longer host buffets in its cafeteria. Alternatively, *Tsunasho* has been offering lunch boxes and distributing them outside of the centre to avoid overcrowding. In the spring, *Tsunasho* also held a picnic event, where participants ate their lunch boxes in a park. Indeed, these innovations have been indispensable to keeping *Tsunasho* operational during the pandemic. However, they also hamper the soft underbelly of *Tsunasho*, which depends on human interaction – if Mrs. Nakamura cannot personally connect with participants, it becomes increasingly difficult to provide support.

The pandemic has also negatively influenced the support *Tsunasho* receives from volunteers and other staff. "Because of COVID-19," claims Mrs. Nakamura, "I can't ask for more assistance from houseworkers." Higher risks of infection mean that even those who want to support *Tsunasho* may be unable to do so. Unable to freely interact with the local community, even current staff has experienced setbacks, restricting their movement by only travelling between *Tsunasho*, and work or school. COVID-19 restrictions and a lack of staff have vastly transformed *Tsunasho* where the lively community centre once operated every day of the week, it

now only opens its doors on Wednesdays and Sundays.

Such struggles have reverberated across Aichi prefecture. The Aichi *Kodomo-Shokudō* network announced that about half of the *kodomo-shokudō* have drastically reduced operations amidst COVID-19, with most only opening once a month. *Honwaka-shokudō*, a children's cafeteria in Nagoya City, Aichi has become one of these centres. The owner, a woman named Toshiko Matsudo, opened the cafeteria in 2016, before many other children's cafeterias.

Due to reduced operations, Mrs. Toshiko has been implementing a food pantry system in place of a cafeteria, reserving food and distributing it to families in need. Mrs. Toshiko has recorded the names of 80 families on a delivery list. If there are only children at home, volunteers will sometimes deliver the food by car. This is one way that Japan's *kodomo-shokudō* can make the most of restricted operation hours during COVID-19.

### Supporting our COVID-19 soldiers

To combat the tough conditions of COVID-19, Mrs. Nakamura plans to establish *Tsunasho* as a social infrastructure, expanding its operations beyond serving food. With suicide rates increasing during the pandemic, she particularly wants to expand *Tsunasho's* services to support more women and children. To do so, Mrs. Nakamura has been collecting donations of books and toys.

An important key to implementing many of these plans, Mrs. Nakamura claims, is pushing the government to recognize *Tsunasho* as public housing: doing so opens the door for subsidized rent. If, in this way, Mrs. Nakamura can cut the operational costs of *Tsunasho*, she can invest resources into establishing more *kodomo-shokudō*, supporting local students, and creating safe refuges for struggling woman and children.

While COVID-19 has presented *Tsunasho* with many struggles, Mrs. Nakamura possesses many hopes and plans for the future of the centre. With fervor, Mrs. Nakamura promises something to her struggling community: "I always look before I leap. And the next time I leap, I know there will be a web of support to help *Tsunasho* succeed." "What we need to remember" the owner tells us, "is not only to receive, but to also give to others." In the hands of passionate leaders like Mrs. Nakamura, Aichi's *kodomo-shokudō* have a bright and diverse future – but only if local communities and governments step up to give their support.