

In Japan it is said there are currently several million impoverished older people, who are living at or lower the livelihood protection level. They often cannot have enough foods, cannot afford medical cost so as just to take general drugs like painkillers without undergoing any treatment, and eventually die alone. No specific or effective remedies have been taken by government or local municipal offices hitherto to cope with this issue. The existence of so many impoverished older people is a proof that it is not to be attributable to the individual's lack of efforts or abilities or laziness, but what is to be rectified is social system too much focused on economical development, and probably, our consciousness and emotion accustomed to human exclusion.

Impoverished older people lack sufficient income, savings and reliable person, which means they have lost every safety net. The reasons why the number of elder people having those three poverty-constituting factors is increasing would be mainly due to the current social structure and cannot be solved by only individual's responsibility and his/her own efforts. Neglecting these problems will not keep the impoverished older people suffering, but also lead to significant social loss.

When an older person in a family becomes impoverished, his/her children would often suffer in the similar way. If such cases as impoverished older people cause younger generation suffer, then there may arise a risk that older people, principally those impoverished, would not be respected, or excluded or deemed as burden in the society. Most of the older people would have worked hard to nurture their families and contributed to the development of society and economy. In most of civilized society older people are respected by general people.

Impoverished older people need to resort to the social security, mainly welfare or livelihood protection system, but there are many people who do not or cannot do it, because of not knowing how to use it or, particularly in Japan, having a strongly ashamed feeling. Unlike the pension etc., livelihood protection system is not supported by people's fee payment, but is 100% tax-paid, which may be the reason of their feeling to avoid relying on it. It is crucial to solve this problem that the livelihood protection system is promoted and disseminated in easy-to-understand and easy-to-apply way. Government and local municipal communities must clearly inform the impoverished older people of the availability of livelihood protection system and encourage them to show up at the place to apply for it.

The main cause of worsening the situation would be the adoption of examination/approval-upon-application rule in almost all the supporting policies. This rule means that those suffering older people cannot use the system unless they themselves show up with their intention to have consultation or application at the jurisdictional office counter. Some experts point out that the real aim of adopting the examination/approval-upon-application rule is to suppress the utilization of the social welfare system. Thus, such stance of the government or local municipal administration as not to inform or help them sufficiently unless they themselves request would be one of the cause of prejudice, discrimination or misunderstanding on the livelihood protection system and its beneficiaries, which leads to the lasting suffering of the impoverished older people. (end)