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Chapter 4

Social Welfare: Current Conditions and Issues for Future Consideration

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Public Assistance

This chapter focuses on social welfare based on current labor and income conditions as described in the preceding chapter. The Hokkaido University survey revealed that 5.2% of Ainu households were receiving public assistance—a figure that increases to 10% when those that had previously received such assistance (4.8%) are included (Table 4-1). The percentage of households receiving public assistance exceeded the corresponding figures for Hokkaido (3.9%) and all of Japan (2.2%) as of 2006 (Table 4-2). The percentage of public assistance recipients among the Ainu (3.8%) as shown in the Report on the Hokkaido Ainu Living Conditions Survey (Department of Environment and Lifestyle, Hokkaido Government 2007) also surpassed the corresponding figure for Hokkaido municipalities with Ainu residents (2.5%).

By age group of head of household, the percentage of households receiving public assistance with heads aged under 30 was low at 1.8%, but the corresponding figures for households with heads aged 30-39 and 60-69 were high, ranging from a little over 4.0% to slightly over 6.0%. The figure rose further to 12.2% for households with heads who were 70 years of age or over (Table 4-3).

Table 4-1 Households receiving public assistance Units: No. of households, %

Households currently receiving public assistance	Households that had previously received public assistance	Households that had never received public assistance	No response	Total
152	140	2,319	292	2,903
5.2	4.8	79.9	10.1	100.0

Table 4-2 Percentage of households receiving public assistance in the Hokkaido University survey, Hokkaido and all of Japan

Hokkaido University survey	5.2%
Hokkaido	3.9%
All of Japan	2.2%

Note: The data for Hokkaido and all of Japan were based on Social Indicators by Prefecture 2009 issued by Japan's Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications.

Table 4-3 Households receiving public assistance by age group of head of household
 Units: No. of households, %

	Households currently receiving public assistance	Households that had previously received public assistance	Households that had never received public assistance	Total
Under 30	1	1	55	57
	1.8	1.8	96.5	100.0
30 – 39	13	13	204	230
	5.7	5.7	88.7	100.0
40 – 49	25	27	491	543
	4.6	5.0	90.4	100.0
50 – 59	33	43	733	809
	4.1	5.3	90.6	100.0
60 – 69	38	32	556	626
	6.1	5.1	88.8	100.0
70 or over	40	22	265	327
	12.2	6.7	81.0	100.0
Total	150	138	2,304	2,592
	5.8	5.3	88.9	100.0

Note: Excluding those indicating no response

Table 4-4 indicates a serious situation, in which 20% of female-headed households were receiving public assistance—a figure that increases to 35.3% when those that had previously received such assistance are included.

By region, the percentages of households receiving public assistance were high in (1) Tokachi, (2) Ishikari, (3) Hidaka, (4) Kushiro and Nemuro, (5) Kamikawa, Soya, and Abashiri, (6) Iburi, and (7) Oshima in descending order (excluding areas where the Hokkaido Utari Association has no branches) (Table 4-5).

Iburi and Hidaka Subprefectures, which showed trends similar to those of the Ainu throughout Hokkaido in terms of employment conditions and occupations, also showed similar figures in terms of the ratio of public assistance recipients. The same was true of Kushiro and Nemuro as well as Kamikawa, Soya, and Abashiri Subprefectures. In contrast, households currently receiving public assistance and those that had previously received such assistance in Ishikari and Tokachi Subprefectures exceeded the corresponding figure for the Ainu throughout Hokkaido. In Tokachi in particular, 20.3% of respondents said that they were currently receiving aid—14.5 percentage points higher than the figure for the Ainu throughout Hokkaido. The percentage of households that had previously received public assistance (11.5%) was also 6.1 percentage points higher in Tokachi than the figure for the Ainu throughout Hokkaido.

 Table 4-4 Households receiving public assistance by gender of head of household
 Units: No. of households, %

	Households currently receiving public assistance	Households that had previously received public assistance	Households that had never received public assistance	Total
Male	47	61	1,946	2,054
	2.3	3.0	94.7	100.0
Female	98	75	318	491
	20.0	15.3	64.8	100.0
Total	145	136	2,264	2,545
	5.7	5.3	89.0	100.0

Note: Excluding those indicating no response

Table 4-5 Households receiving public assistance by region Units: No. of households, %

	Households currently receiving public assistance	Households that had previously received public assistance	Households that had never received public assistance	Total
Ishikari Subprefecture	27 8.0	24 7.1	288 85.0	339 100.0
Oshima Subprefecture	1 0.7	1 0.7	146 98.6	148 100.0
Kamikawa, Soya, and Abashiri Subprefectures	2 3.8	4 7.7	46 88.5	52 100.0
Tokachi Subprefecture	37 20.3	21 11.5	124 68.1	182 100.0
Iburi Subprefecture	27 3.1	38 4.4	808 92.6	873 100.0
Hidaka Subprefecture	44 5.9	43 5.8	657 88.3	744 100.0
Kushiro and Nemuro Subprefectures	13 5.1	6 2.4	235 92.5	254 100.0
Areas where the Hokkaido Utari Association has no branches	1 5.3	3 15.8	15 78.9	19 100.0
Total	152 5.8	140 5.4	2,319 88.8	2,611 100.0

In the area of school expense subsidies, on the other hand, 47.5% of respondents (multiple answers) were using or had used the Incentive Program to Promote Education at High School Level for Ainu Children, indicating that the project has helped Ainu children to go on to high school despite the fact that many Ainu households are facing economic difficulty.

Pensions and Health Insurance

The survey showed that 42.7% of respondents were covered by the national pension scheme and 37.8% by employee's pension insurance, while 8.2% were not covered (Table 4-6). Although the largest group of respondents was covered by the national pension scheme, it is unknown whether those eligible to receive pension benefits were collecting amounts large enough to cover their basic living costs.

A trial calculation by the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare showed that among 71.48 million people eligible to join the public pension scheme, an estimated 3.64 million, or 5.1%, refused to join the scheme or were not paying premiums as of March 31, 2001 (Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare 2002). This survey indicated that 8.2% of respondents were not covered—a figure slightly higher than the estimate for the whole of Japan.

By age group, the high percentage of those under 30 who were not covered stands out (Table 4-7). By gender, there were slightly more women who were not covered or ineligible to receive public pensions than men (Table 4-8). By region, over 10% of respondents were not covered or ineligible in Ishikari, Tokachi, and Kushiro and Nemuro Subprefectures (Table 4-9).

Results for health insurance coverage shows that the largest group of respondents was covered by the national health insurance scheme (Table 4-10). Those not covered accounted for 3.7%. In terms of insurance types, younger age groups had fewer respondents covered by national health insurance and more covered by other types (Table 4-11). By gender, a slightly higher percentage of male respondents was insured (Table 4-12). By region, many respondents were uninsured in both Tokachi and Ishikari Subprefectures (Table 4-13).

Table 4-6 Status of those covered by the public pension scheme Units: No. of people, %

National pension	Mutual aid pension	Employee's pension insurance	Other pension	Not covered	No response	Total
2,436	111	2,153	64	470	469	5,703
42.7	1.9	37.8	1.1	8.2	8.2	100.0

Table 4-7 Status of those covered by the public pension scheme by age group Units: No. of people, %

	National pension	Mutual aid pension	Employee's pension insurance	Other pension	Not covered	Total
Under 30	286 35.3	13 1.6	368 45.4	3 0.4	140 17.3	810 100.0
30 – 39	263 40.9	15 2.3	303 47.1	2 0.3	60 9.3	643 100.0
40 – 49	467 44.9	24 2.3	466 44.8	7 0.7	76 7.3	1,040 100.0
50 – 59	602 47.3	29 2.3	539 42.3	14 1.1	90 7.1	1,274 100.0
60 – 69	421 47.4	16 1.8	358 40.3	12 1.4	81 9.1	888 100.0
70 or over	368 71.9	10 2.0	100 19.5	11 2.1	23 4.5	512 100.0
Total	2,407 46.6	107 2.1	2,134 41.3	49 0.9	470 9.1	5,167 100.0

Note: Excluding those indicating no response

Table 4-8 Status of those covered by the public pension scheme by gender Units: No. of people, %

	National pension	Mutual aid pension	Employee's pension insurance	Other pension	Not covered	Total
Men	1,132 43.9	63 2.4	1,147 44.5	20 0.8	214 8.3	2,576 100.0
Women	1,298 49.0	48 1.8	1,012 38.2	30 1.1	261 9.9	2,649 100.0
Total	2,430 46.5	111 2.1	2,159 41.3	50 1.0	475 9.1	5,225 100.0

Note: Excluding those indicating no response

Table 4-9 Status of those covered by the public pension scheme by region

Units: No. of people, %

	National pension	Mutual aid pension	Employee's pension insurance	Other pension	Not covered	Total
Ishikari Subprefecture	200 30.0	27 4.0	314 47.1	6 0.9	120 18.0	667 100.0
Oshima Subprefecture	273 74.0	2 0.5	59 16.0	6 1.6	29 7.9	369 100.0
Kamikawa, Soya, and Abashiri Subprefectures	36 45.6	2 2.5	34 43.0	2 2.5	5 6.3	79 100.0
Tokachi Subprefecture	162 46.7	0 0.0	138 39.8	0 0.0	47 13.5	347 100.0
Iburi Subprefecture	787 43.6	34 1.9	845 46.8	8 0.4	130 7.2	1,804 100.0
Hidaka Subprefecture	717 49.0	35 2.4	599 40.9	26 1.8	87 5.9	1,464 100.0
Kushiro and Nemuro Subprefectures	248 54.5	11 2.4	141 31.0	2 0.4	53 11.6	455 100.0
Areas where the Hokkaido Utari Association has no branches	14 28.6	0 0.0	31 63.3	0 0.0	4 8.2	49 100.0
Total	2,437 46.6	111 2.1	2,161 41.3	50 1.0	475 9.1	5,234 100.0

Note: Excluding those indicating no response

Table 4-10 Status of health insurance coverage

Units: No. of people, %

National health insurance	Other health insurance	Uninsured	No response	Total
2,891	1,876	213	723	5,703
50.7	32.9	3.7	12.7	100.0

Table 4-11 Status of health insurance coverage by age group

Units: No. of people, %

	National health insurance	Other health insurance	Uninsured	Total
Under 30	360 45.9	382 48.7	42 5.4	784 100.0
30 – 39	316 50.6	284 45.4	25 4.0	625 100.0
40 – 49	511 51.8	447 45.3	28 2.8	986 100.0
50 – 59	666 54.7	503 41.3	48 3.9	1,217 100.0
60 – 69	599 70.8	202 23.9	45 5.3	846 100.0
70 or over	400 86.4	40 8.6	23 5.0	463 100.0
Total	2,852 58.0	1,858 37.8	211 4.3	4,921 100.0

Note: Excluding those indicating no response

Table 4-12 Status of health insurance coverage by gender

Units: No. of people, %

	National health insurance	Other health insurance	Uninsured	Total
Men	1,480 60.8	867 35.6	88 3.6	2,435 100.0
Women	1,406 55.4	1,009 39.7	125 4.9	2,540 100.0
Total	2,886 58.0	1,876 37.7	213 4.3	4,975 100.0

Table 4-13 Status of health insurance coverage by region

Units: No. of people, %

	National health insurance	Other health insurance	Uninsured	Total
Ishikari Subprefecture	284 44.2	309 48.1	50 7.8	643 100.0
Oshima Subprefecture	291 86.1	45 13.3	2 0.6	338 100.0
Kamikawa, Soya, and Abashiri Subprefectures	45 57.7	32 41.0	1 1.3	78 100.0
Tokachi Subprefecture	174 55.6	105 33.5	34 10.9	313 100.0
Iburi Subprefecture	954 55.1	732 42.3	44 2.5	1,730 100.0
Hidaka Subprefecture	842 59.6	507 35.9	63 4.5	1,412 100.0
Kushiro and Nemuro Subprefectures	285 68.2	119 28.5	14 3.3	418 100.0
Areas where the Hokkaido Utari Association has no branches	16 33.3	27 56.3	5 10.4	48 100.0
Total	2,891 58.1	1,876 37.7	213 4.3	4,980 100.0

Note: Excluding those indicating no response

Relationships between Labor, Income, and Public Assistance

Figure 4-1 shows characteristics of Ainu households and individuals in terms of employment condition, occupation, annual income, and the ratio of public assistance recipients, based on the observations of the current and preceding chapters.

In the Hokkaido University survey, the percentages of regular employees, part-time and temporary workers, self-employed workers, and family employees were high, but the percentage of regular employees was lower than the corresponding figure in the Hokkaido data. Although the number of low-income regular employees was small, that of low-income earners was relatively large compared with the figure in the Hokkaido data because the employment ratio for regular employees was lower among Ainu households than that in the Hokkaido data. The fact that the percentages of part-time and temporary workers as well as those engaged in family work (considered an unstable type of employment) were higher than the corresponding figures in the Hokkaido data also contributed to the higher number of low-income earners. As for occupational characteristics, the percentages of agriculture, forestry and fisheries workers, craftspeople, manufacturing workers, and other related workers, and service

workers were high. Among them, many service workers had low incomes, and certain numbers of agriculture, forestry and fisheries workers, as well as craftspeople, manufacturing workers, and other related workers, also had low incomes. On the other hand, the percentages of administrative and managerial workers as well as specialist and technical workers with relatively stable incomes were small irrespective of age group, gender, and region.

Therefore, many respondents were in employment conditions and occupations that had high percentages of low-income earners. Conversely, few were in employment conditions and occupations that had high percentages of high-income earners. Consequently, many Ainu households and individuals had relatively low incomes.

However, the situation differed even amongst the Ainu depending on age group, gender, and region. Many elderly respondents, i.e., those aged 60 or over, were engaged in agriculture, forestry, and fisheries as self-employed or family employees. Younger age groups had fewer respondents with these employment conditions and occupations. It is true that the numbers of regular employees and specialists with relatively stable incomes slightly increased among younger age groups such as those under 30, but the related percentages were still lower than the corresponding figures in the Hokkaido data. Conversely, the percentages of part-time and temporary workers and family employees among young people did not differ significantly from those in all other age groups. Also in terms of occupation, a considerable number of respondents were service workers, clerical workers, and sales staff, many of whom had low incomes. While employment conditions and occupations differed among age groups, little improvement had been made in terms of work with unstable incomes compared with the Hokkaido data. Accordingly, if this trend continues, it may be difficult to significantly reduce the numbers of Ainu households and individuals with low incomes.

By gender, fewer women than men were regular or self-employed workers. Therefore, women tend to have less stable incomes. Many women were part-time or temporary workers, or worked in a family business. The majority of these types of positions offer lower wages or salaries. In particular, many female-headed households had low incomes, and the ratio of households receiving public assistance among them was high. Ainu households and individuals had more low-income earners than in the Hokkaido data, but even among them, Ainu women were in more unstable employment situations. Here, the challenges unique to Ainu women—the double disadvantages of gender and ethnicity—were manifest.

By region, Iburi, Hidaka, Kushiro and Nemuro, and Kamikawa, Soya, and Abashiri shared many characteristics in terms of employment conditions and occupations in Ainu households as shown in this survey. Unlike the Hokkaido data, the Ainu household and population percentages in these regions were relatively high, and the proportion of the Ainu population was small in Ishikari Subprefecture, which has a large number of urban workers. It is therefore believed that these regional characteristics became the characteristics of Ainu households in Hokkaido overall.

At the same time, the relatively low annual incomes of Ainu households and individuals compared with the corresponding figures in the Hokkaido data were also considered a result of low annual incomes in Iburi, Hidaka, Kushiro and Nemuro as well as in the Kamikawa, Soya, and Abashiri regions. Furthermore, even in Ishikari and Tokachi Subprefectures, where the percentages of urban workers were high, many households and individuals had low incomes. This was one of the factors behind the high percentage of low-income earners among Ainu households and individuals. Conversely, the number of low-income households and individuals was small in Oshima Subprefecture, but this did not substantially boost the overall annual income of Ainu households and individuals because Oshima had low household and population numbers.

Investigation of the presence or absence of Ainu heritage revealed that the characteristics of employment condition, occupation, and social welfare among Ainu households and individuals had been handed down through

generations irrespective of Ainu heritage. This was probably because men and women with relatively similar employment conditions, occupations, annual incomes, and other conditions, married and raised children in families with fewer-than-average financial, cultural, and social resources, while continuing to be denied opportunities that would help them build stable lives, such as chances to go on to higher-level education and secure favorable employment. The same inference was derived from a series of interviews entitled *Ainuminzoku hansei wo kataru* by Yasutoshi Nakamura (Nakamura 2009).

Against this backdrop is the practical issue of resource and ability gaps among families. As pointed out in *Gendai nihon no mienai hinkon* authored by Osamu Aoki, despite this issue, systems in Japanese society depend on families with a strong ideology valuing personal/family responsibilities, causing the social system for addressing the issue to remain fragile (Aoki 2003). As a result, equality of opportunity is yet to be guaranteed.

Fig. 4-1 Ainu household characteristics with regard to labor and financial security

	Age group	Gender	Region
Employment condition			
High percentage of part-time and temporary workers	Applies to all	Applies to both (particularly women)	Applies to all except for Oshima (particularly Tokachi)
High percentage of self-employed workers	Applies to those aged 40 or over (particularly those aged 60 or over)	Applies to men	Applies to all except for Tokachi (particularly Oshima, Kamikawa, Soya, and Abashiri)
High percentage of family employees	Applies to all (particularly those aged 70 or over)	Applies to both (particularly women)	Applies to all except for Ishikari, Kamikawa, Soya, Abashiri, and Tokachi (particularly Oshima)
High percentage of regular workers (but lower than the Hokkaido data percentage)	Applies to those under 70 (particularly those under 30)	Applies to both (particularly men)	Applies to all except for Oshima
Occupation			
High percentage of agriculture, forestry, and fisheries workers	Applies to all (particularly those aged 70 or over)	Applies to both (particularly men)	Applies to all except for Ishikari (particularly Oshima)
High percentage of service workers	Applies to those under 70	Applies to women	Applies to all except for Oshima (particularly Ishikari)
Low percentage of specialist and technical workers	Applies to those aged 30 or over (particularly those aged 60 or over)	Applies to both (particularly men)	Applies to all except for Ishikari (particularly Oshima)
High percentage of craftspeople and manufacturing workers/other related workers	Applies to those under 60	Applies to men	Applies to all except for Oshima
Annual income			
High percentage of low-income households (under 2 million yen)	Applies to all (particularly those aged 70 or over)	Applies to both (particularly female-headed households)	Applies to all except for Oshima (particularly Tokachi)
Social security			
High percentage of households receiving public assistance	Applies to those aged 30 or over (particularly those aged 70 or over)	Applies to female-headed households	Applies to all except for Oshima (particularly Tokachi)

Note: By way of example, if the percentage of part-time and temporary workers aged under 30 was more than half the corresponding figure for all age groups, this was considered an applicable case (or within a factor of 1.5 when a small percentage was indicated). The term particularly was used when the figure concerned was at least 1.5 times as high as the corresponding figure for all age groups (or up to 0.5 times as high when a small percentage was indicated). For gender, the term particularly was used for cases with a higher percentage (or those with a lower percentage when a small percentage was indicated).

Issues for Future Consideration

This survey confirmed relatively large numbers of low-income households and individuals as well as public assistance recipients. This suggests that general educational and welfare measures and educational and livelihood support programs based on the Hokkaido Government's Measures to Promote the Improvement of Ainu Living Standards are not effective enough to bridge the gap in living standards between Ainu households and average Hokkaido households. Given this situation, measures to at least address economic disparities within Hokkaido are required. Many elderly Ainu individuals and households have low incomes, and there is a high ratio of public assistance recipients among them. Due to limited opportunities for the elderly to find new jobs and generate sufficient income, public assistance recipients and those living in poverty without public assistance will need financial help or support to deal with challenges that arise, such as disease, isolation, and the need for nursing care. If the trend among young Ainu people in their 20s and 30s to live in urban areas continues, work placement in regular employment and more opportunities for high-income occupations as well as vocational training to provide qualifications and skills will be necessary to improve quality of life.

By gender, many women in Ainu households (particularly female-headed households) had low incomes, and the ratio of public assistance recipients was also high. In this regard, there is an urgent need for measures to promote the employment of women and provide them with livelihood support. For many single mothers with young children in particular, balancing childcare and work is difficult. If children or parents have an illness or a disability, daily living becomes even harder. As a result, measures relating to employment, childcare, nursing care, and other areas are necessary.

Future survey challenges include ascertaining the working and living conditions of the Ainu more specifically. This will involve carefully elucidating the status of labor and the daily living conditions of self-employed agriculture, forestry and fisheries workers, craftspeople, manufacturing workers, and other related workers in Iburi and Hidaka Subprefectures. Other examples include clarifying the status of labor and the daily living conditions of self-employed agriculture, forestry and fisheries workers, and family employees with stable livelihoods in Oshima and identifying challenges facing those with urban occupations and unstable livelihoods in Ishikari and Tokachi Subprefectures. Future surveys should also cover Ainu women disadvantaged in terms of both ethnicity and gender, low-income elderly people, and young people with non-conventional employment conditions and occupations. The Ainu in Tokyo and other places outside Hokkaido, for whom no surveys have been conducted since 1989, are not covered by the Hokkaido government's Ainu measures (i.e., the Measures to Promote the Improvement of Ainu Living Standards), and the status of their labor and living conditions are unknown. As more surveys are conducted, we must identify necessary measures and verify their effects.

With the relatively large number of Ainu households and individuals engaging in unstable employment and without the capacity to generate enough income irrespective of age group, gender, and region, there is danger of this situation becoming institutionalized. Prominent American sociologist William Julius Wilson pointed out that African-Americans tended to live in distressed areas known as inner cities in the U.S. and faced the problems of low incomes and crime, particularly from the 1980s onward, due to discriminatory economic class structures (Wilson 1987) established through a history of discrimination and prejudice over hundreds of years and institutionalized in the labor market. Due to these social structures, a relatively large number of African-Americans have worked as low-wage earners. If we take this viewpoint, it should be considered imperative to elucidate the history of formation behind Ainu employment conditions and occupations.

Last but not least, I would like to discuss the positioning of employment and livelihood support in Ainu policies. According to Tessa Morris-Suzuki, Ainu people had their material resources taken away by the colonizing

state and by merchants during the process of modernization. They were in fact robbed twice because their communities were also ravaged and destroyed by researchers repeatedly creating fictional situations suggesting that indigenous peoples were destined to disappear (Suzuki 2000). Conventional Ainu policies failed to address the related problems, and both economic and non-economic resources were usurped when Ainu communities were incorporated into modern society. The draft Law for the Promotion of the Ainu Culture and for the Dissemination and Advocacy for the Traditions of the Ainu and the Ainu Culture compiled by the Hokkaido Utari Association also pointed out that the current Hokkaido Utari Welfare Measures are nothing more than a patchwork of existing laws and systems. They not only lack consistency but also fail to clarify the national government's responsibility toward the Ainu, among others. There is a need to eradicate anti-Ainu discrimination with the aim of restoring their ethnic rights and to establish a fundamental and comprehensive system that includes measures to promote culture and education for the Ainu as well as economic self-sufficiency (Hokkaido Utari Association 1984).

In this way, economic and non-economic relations of inequality were forced upon the Ainu during the course of Hokkaido's modernization. As this author knows, many Ainu people are struggling under pressure to assimilate in the face of discrimination and poverty. In aiming to address the asymmetrical relationship between the Ainu and the majority, the necessary employment and livelihood support should be considered in the context of comprehensive Ainu policies.

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