

Peace Boat's Global University 2015

Unit 5 Action Plan "Towards Common Human Security in Asia"

Final Presentation Script (Group A)

Good afternoon. My name is Yuya Yanai, a participant of the Global University Special Program. In this presentation I would like to talk about migrant workers, a topic we chose through the on board lectures and the exposure programs in Japan, the Philippines, and Singapore. Hayato Ohashi, another participant of this program will be responsible for the English translation.

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The world is experiencing a huge growth in the number of migrant workers. According to UN data released in 2013 there are approximately 232million migrant workers across the world and migrant population has increased by 50 percent in the last 33 years.

The issue of illegal immigrants are also becoming serious.

In addition, conflicts or potential conflicts between the migrants and domestic workers or local residents should be considered as an imminent threat.

Considering these current situations, we believe migration is a topic that requires attention and actions of all nations.

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This photo was taken in Singapore while we attended a lecture in the office of TWC2, a NGO acting to improve the environment migrant workers in Singapore are in. In this lecture we learned how badly migrant workers are being treated. For example migrant workers are often being made to live together with 20 to 30 men in a room no bigger than the office in the photo.

Based on what we have learned through this program including the exposure in Singapore we made 3 agenda policies to improve the lives of migrant workers.

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They are:

Creating an environment in which migrant workers can form or join unions

Ensuring that minimum wage covers the basic necessities such as food housing and medical insurance

Access to compulsory education for all migrant children

I will give detailed explanations of each agenda

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The basic idea of the first agenda is for the government to give migrants the right to join existing unions. In order to achieve this, efforts of migrant workers as well as the pressure from NGOs that

support migrants are necessary. By securing this right, migrant workers will be enabled to make demands to protect their interests. We believe belonging to the union could also serve as a mental support for the workers working in a unaccustomed environment. In addition, in this rapidly globalizing world, creating a multinational environment in the union may serve positively in the establishment of international cooperation and ties among unions which we believe will further empower the unions.

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Expected challenges are opposition from domestic workers, and oppression from businesses and governments which view unionization negatively. It is important to appeal (to the public/gov) that the right to form unions are one of the essential and basic rights.

(P7)

The second agenda deals with minimum wage. First we propose obligating companies to sign (longer term contracts of for example 1year) based on the idea that in order for accepting countries to profit from migrant workers it is important that the workers are long term, regular, and legal workers. As of the minimum wage, it will be set at an amount which will cover health insurance and minimum lent in addition to other daily necessities. (Documenting)The contracts will be effective in protecting the workers' rights since it will enable judicial assistance.

Our plan also includes giving migrants the same rights as local residents after 5years of consecutive labour in the accepting country. In this presentation we will name this right [citizenship] but we would also like to emphasize that this right does not entail any political rights and in that sense is different from having a nationality. Our main aim in creating this system is to alleviate discrimination. In the current Japanese system, foreign nationals residing in japan are given (zairyuuka-do). Although the card guarantees the protection of certain rights, it could be said this system is highly discriminative in that the card serves to label people as foreigners. Our goal is to give the entitled migrants the same ID (card/number) as the local residents and give them the same legal rights.

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The expected challenges for this agenda are lack of financial resources and opposition from local residents. We are also concerned the change in the system will not actually change the discriminative mindset of the people.

Regarding the financial resources, vocational training prior to migration can reduce the cost of training on the employer side. Enhancing work efficiency through signing long term contracts can be another solution. Changing the local residents image or prejudice against migrants is a difficult problem which needs to be solved through a longer time span. However we believe by combining this agenda with effective education, which will be mentioned next, we can improve the situation.

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The third agenda which is about education is mainly comprised of two parts. First is to provide free compulsory education to all children of migrants with citizenship. We believe providing them with equal educational opportunity as the local children will help the poverty stricken migrants to break the vicious cycle of poverty.

Second is to provide vocational training to workers prior to emigration under the sending countries responsibility. This system can also serve to regulate the number of migrant workers. In the case of the Philippines where they introduced a compulsory job training system which accompanied an age restriction, the number of migrants dropped drastically. We believe this system is beneficial for both employers and workers in that it guarantees the quality of labour and will increase the likelihood for the migrants to find a job. In addition we believe we can provide job opportunity as a vocational trainer for workers with experience.

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There are mainly three challenges in the establishment of this system. First is financing. To hold the sending nation responsible for the quality of its workers, the cost of the vocational training is to be covered by the sending nation. We view this cost is a necessary investment in creating mutual trust between the sending and accepting nations. On the other hand education of the migrants children will be provided at the accepting nations cost. This can be seen as an investment as well in that accepting nations will be able to convey the impression as a migrant friendly country to the international society and the workers themselves, which may serve positively in securing high quality labour. It could be said this is a similar concept to the corporate social responsibility.

Since this is a totally new system it is highly likely that unexpected problems may come up when realized.

Another concern is opposition from local residents, especially the low income citizens. National governments will have to provide citizens with equal benefits in order not to create dissatisfaction.

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In this image we have visualized the three agendas plus the citizenship as key factors. We believe unionization and minimum wage will positively influence migrants' life through improving working environment while citizenship and education will do so from a social approach.

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Before ending the presentation, I would like to share our ideas on what the actual cause of the problems are.

First cause should be the biased view against migrant workers and manual labour. Although migrant workers are contributing to the accepting countries economy through engaging in the so called 3d jobs most people view migrants simply as trouble. Listening to our presentation some of you may have thought [I don't want my kids to learn in the same school as migrant kids]

Japan is expected to experience a serious lack of labour force in the coming years. Utilizing foreign labour is said to be one of the solution. However without changing the discriminative attitude towards migrant workers, peaceful coexistence can never be realized. To prevent the potential opportunity from turning into a disaster, educational reform is necessary from both the migrant and the accepting side. Giving the opportunity to think of ways to coexist peacefully regardless of nationality or race is extremely important.

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Second focus should be the system in which some are forced to migrate. Considering the fact that the movement of workers is created by the flow of money, it could be said that the human right violation surrounding migrants are by-products of capitalism.

Although the equation “migrants = trouble” should be reconsidered we have to acknowledge the fact that there is a certain degree of truth behind that idea.

For example the shown photo is a sign we found in Singapore prohibiting people from drinking alcohol on the streets. This sign was set after an incident caused by an intoxicated migrant worker.

Unfortunately we are not able to propose any system that can replace capitalism which we believe is creating the [unwanted] migrants.

What I can say for now is that we have to keep in mind that the economic activities we engage in everyday actually result in migration. I believe it is responsibility for each of us to think of a solution to the current structure which causes unwanted migration.

‘Nationality and age do not stop us from learning.’ I wish everyone here puts your thought on this issue for a moment.

We are really grateful of having an opportunity to present what we learned through the program in front of everyone. We will finish our voyage in Mumbai. We hope the rest of your voyage will be full of excitement and happiness.