

<教育報告>

Role of an NGO in the Health Care of Foreign Residents – GENKI Activities and Perceptions of its Collaborators –

在日外国人の保健医療におけるNGOの役割 – GENKIの活動と関係者の認識について –

Team No. 3

Team Members : Masahiro MATSUSHIMA, Wu JIABING, Canisius BANDA, Shizu WATANABE,
Bertha GYAU, Shoko YABE, Hiltruda TEMBA, Ayako TOKUNAGA

Supervisors : Etsuji OKAMOTO, Nobuyoshi WATAHIKI, George LAWLOR

Keywords : foreign residents, health care, health insurance, health checkup, NGO.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Foreign residents in Japan

According to statistical data from the Ministry of Justice, the number of registered foreigners in Japan has been increasing every year, reaching 1,915,030 in 2003¹⁾. Compared with the figure for 1993, the population of foreigners has grown by 45%. In 2003, the proportion of registered foreign residents to the total population reached 1.5%, the highest ever recorded.

Health care services for tuberculosis (TB)^{2,3)}, and maternal and child health^{4,5,6,7)} are offered to foreign residents regardless of their immigration status, and subsidized by the government. For other health care services, however, these residents must bear full costs. The situation is worsened by the fact that most foreigners with illegitimate immigration status do not have health insurance⁸⁾.

Additionally, many foreign residents have difficulties accessing medical facilities and health care services, in general, because of a lack of medical information and language difficulties. To help address these problems, there are some non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which provide health care services to foreign residents in Japan^{9, 10, 11)}.

2. Kawaguchi City

Kawaguchi City is located in the south of Saitama

Prefecture. The population is approximately 490,000 and that of registered foreign residents is 15,580¹²⁾, the largest number in Saitama¹³⁾, because of many small-sized factories in the city which offer working opportunities. With the increasing number of foreigners over the years, an increased prevalence of TB in this population was noted by the Kawaguchi Public Health Center (PHC). Aware of the need to control TB, the PHC carried out a health checkup for these residents, with a group of volunteers, in 1998¹⁴⁾.

3. GENKI

GENKI (Global Emigrants Network in Saitama) is a non-profit NGO. It was formed in 1998 to ease difficulties foreign residents face in accessing health care services, to help reduce the high prevalence of disease in the foreigner population and to help out foreigners with needs other than health care¹⁵⁾.

4. Objectives

The broad goal of the study was to assess GENKI's activities and the perceptions of its collaborators regarding its functions. The specific objectives were: (1) To find out the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats concerning GENKI and its activities, (2) to determine whether GENKI's activities are needed or not, and (3) to make recommendations to GENKI based on our findings.

指導教官：岡本悦司（経営科学部），綿引信義（人材育成部）

George Lawlor（公衆衛生政策部）

5. Hypothesis

GENKI's activities are needed.

II. METHODOLOGY

1. Target groups

The target groups were foreign residents in Kawaguchi City, GENKI and the Kawaguchi PHC. The study area was Kawaguchi City where GENKI conducts its activities. The number of the foreign residents who were expected to attend the health checkup was 50. However, the actual sample size turned out to be 28. From ten core members of GENKI, we had six respondents.

2. Study design

A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted.

3. Method

Two types of questionnaires were prepared targeting GENKI and foreign residents.

3-1 GENKI's Questionnaire

The questionnaire for GENKI consisted of two parts. The first part was addressed to GENKI as an organization and the second part seeking personal opinions of the core members, was addressed to these individuals. These questionnaires were sent via e-mail and were self-administered.

3-2 Foreign Residents' Questionnaire

The questionnaire for foreign residents addressed: attributes of foreign residents, GENKI's activities, information and its communication, and the necessity for GENKI's functions. The questionnaire was administered by researchers in a structured manner and interviews with foreign residents were conducted in Kawaguchi PHC during the health checkup organized by GENKI.

3-3 Interview with Kawaguchi PHC

A set of questions was prepared for the Kawaguchi PHC upon which an in-depth face-to-face interview was conducted with PHC officials.

4. Data Analysis

Data from the GENKI staff and foreign residents were coded and analyzed using Excel. Information from the Kawaguchi PHC was reviewed to extrapolate useful information.

III. RESULTS

1. Foreign Residents

1-1 General information

A total of 28 foreign residents turned up for the health

checkup as shown in Table 1. Average age was 34 years with the highest being 59 years and the lowest 20 years (Table 2). The average duration of stay in Japan was 5 years 5 months; minimum being 2 months and maximum 18 years 7 months (Table 3). Out of 26 respondents who

Table 1 Distribution of foreign residents by nationality and sex

Sex/Nationality	Male	Female	Total
Filipino	4	4	8
Ghanaian	3	0	3
Kurdish	9	0	9
Bengali	3	0	3
Others*	3	2	5
Total	22	6	28

* Others refers to Americans, Colombians, Peruvians & Nigerians

Table 2 Age distribution among foreign residents

Age category (years)	Frequency
20- 29	10
30- 39	9
40- 49	6
Above 50	3
Total	28

Table 3 Distribution of the duration of stay of foreign residents in Japan by holding health insurance certificates

Duration / Health Insurance	Yes	No	Total
12 months and less	0	7	7
13 months to 24 months**	1	2	3
25 months to 36 months	1	1	2
More than 36 months	2	13	15
Total	4	23	27

**One did not understand the question about health insurance*

Table 4 Holding health insurance certificate by job status

Job / Health Insurance	Yes	No	Total
Yes***	3	22	25
No	1	1	2
Total	4	23	27

***One did not understand the question about health insurance

had a job only three had health insurance certificates; 22 did not have any insurance (Table 4).

1-2 GENKI's activities

Fifteen of the respondents who attended the health

Table 5 How and from whom the foreign residents got information about the health checkup

How/Who informed	GENKI Staff	Community Leader	Friend	Total
Community Meeting	4	6	1	11
Informal Talk	2	1	7	10
Telephone	1	0	5	6
Bulletin	1	0	0	1
Total	8	7	13	28

checkup were informed by GENKI using various methods (Table 5) .

Twenty six respondents said that the health checkup is necessary, while two did not understand the question. Reasons mentioned for attending the health checkup are listed in Figure 1. The majority of respondents said that the service delivery during the health checkup was good (n=25) , the place was convenient (n=27) and the timing was convenient (n=26) . No respondents said that the service delivery during the health checkup was poor or that the place was not convenient. Twenty two respondents said that the current set of tests is sufficient. Almost all (n=27) respondents agreed that the cost for the health checkup was affordable; only one respondent said that the cost was not affordable.

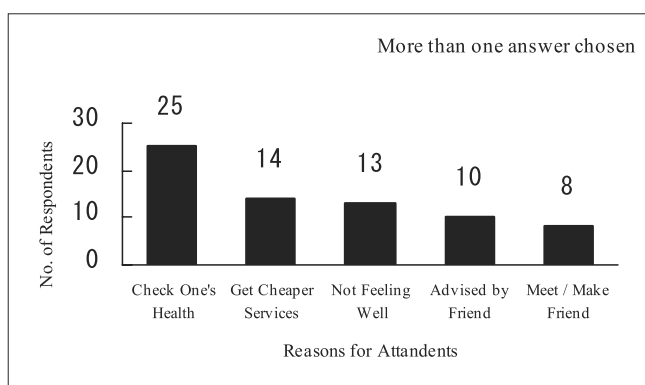


Figure 1 Reasons for attending the health checkup

1-3 Expectation

Other services that the respondents wished to be added to GENKI's current activities are shown in Figure 2.

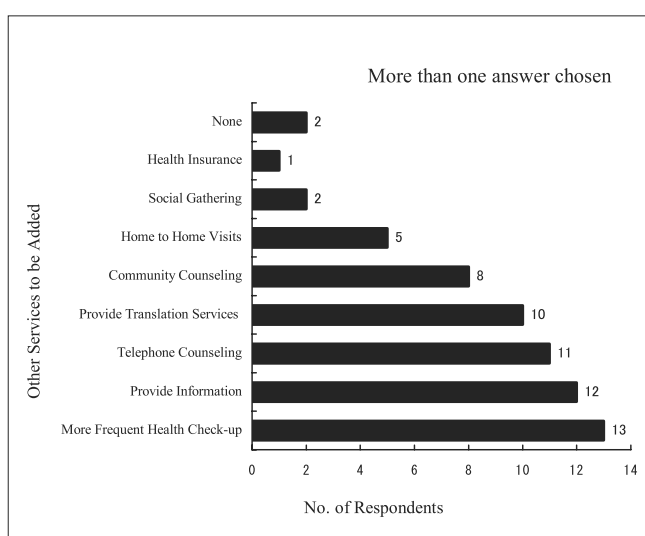


Figure 2 Other services respondents wished to be added

1-4 Health services

Twenty of the respondents did not attend any other health checkup than the one organized by GENKI. Even though 18 of them were employed they attended on GENKI's health checkup, 17 respondents reported to have language difficulties in seeking health care services. The residents said that they access health information through various ways (Table 6) .

Table 6 Foreign residents' ways of accessing health information

Accessing health information	Frequency
Friends	12
Mass media	5
NGO	3
Other	3
No access	6

2. GENKI as an NGO

The reasons that prompted GENKI's formation were to ease the difficulties foreigners face in accessing health services, to help lower the high prevalence of disease in the foreigner population and to help foreigners meet needs other than health care issues.

The objectives were: (1) to meet needs of the foreign residents who wish to be healthy, and (2) to deliver services equally, without discrimination. The activities listed were to conduct health checkups for foreign residents, and to collect and provide information on health care services for foreign residents in Kawaguchi City.

GENKI does collaborate with other NGOs even though the collaboration is limited to personal relationships. GENKI thought that there was no need for further investigations to be added to the current health checkup program. Its annual budget was sufficient and subsidizes the cost of the health checkup by 50%. GENKI's opinions on ways to better to perform its activities included more staff, more support from other NGOs, government and public, to establish good relationships and trust with foreigners, and to stimulate health consciousness and support healthy life styles among foreigners. Both infectious and non-infectious diseases have been revealed by the health checkups. Such findings are recorded by GENKI, and the patients are then referred to appropriate health care facilities or followed-up procedures.

3. GENKI staff

3-1 General information

Attributes of GENKI core staff who responded to the questionnaire are shown in Table 7. The mean age was 38 years with a range of 30 to 45 years. The average duration

of working with GENKI was 5 years 8 months.

Table 7 Attributes of respondents from GENKI staff questionnaire

Occupation / Sex	Male	Female	Total
Health workers	0	3	3
Non-health workers	2	1	3
Total	2	4	6

3-2 Opinions regarding activities

All respondents said that GENKI's activities are needed. The reasons are shown in Table 8. Four members said that GENKI's activities should be expanded to serve more foreigners and reasons are shown in Table 9. Two members said that the activities should not be expanded and gave the following reasons: there is need to improve the quality of activities, that the present human and financial resources are sufficient, but that foreigners who have other additional needs should take care of such matters themselves.

Table 8 Reasons why GENKI's activities are needed

Reasons	Frequency
Lack of health insurance	3
Need for health checkup	5
Difficulties accessing health services	4
High cost of services in Japan	2
Provide health services without discrimination	1
Needed as social activity	1
Foreigners refused health care by Japanese staff	1

Table 9 Reasons for expansion of GENKI's activities

Reasons	Frequency
Increasing demand from foreigners	1
Increasing population of foreigners	2
Increasing disease prevalence	1
Insufficient response of local government	2
Activities depend on foreign residents' needs	1

Five respondents who were not satisfied with the current activities gave the following reasons: services are not adequate, there is no organizational support, and activities are not well planned. Suggested services they wished to be added to GENKI's current activities are presented in Table 10.

Table 10 Other services to be added

Services to be added	Frequency
Provide translation services	1
Provide information	2
Work with community	2
Provide more medical investigations	2
Cooperate with other medical facilities	4

4. Kawaguchi PHC

Kawaguchi PHC has collaborated with GENKI for health checkups four different times; twice in 1998, and once each in 1999 and 2000. Collaboration is defined as sharing budget and planning. From 2001 it has been supporting GENKI only by giving out its premises to conduct the health checkups. Other forms of support that the PHC can provide GENKI include financial help, and x-ray and laboratory facilities. Such support is presently not given because permissions are needed from the prefectural government, PHC staff and taxpayers. The PHC considers GENKI's activities to be a necessary humanitarian service. The PHC reported that they also face some problems in dealing with foreigners such as language barriers and cultural differences. There is collaboration between the PHC and other NGOs.

IV. DISCUSSION

The study was conducted to assess GENKI's activities and to obtain collaborators' perceptions about these functions. Its specific objectives were to determine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats related to GENKI, to ascertain whether their activities are needed, and to make recommendations to GENKI. It is expected that the study will help to give insight on how an NGO can play a role in improving the health of foreign residents in Japan.

1. Foreign Residents

The attributes of the respondents are shown in Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4. All the foreign residents in the study are in the working age group that seeks job opportunities in developed and wealthy countries such as Japan¹⁶⁾. Contrary to our expectation, possession of health insurance certificates by residents did not depend on the duration of stay in Japan (Tables 3 and 4). The majority of both short and long term residents did not have health insurance (85.2%). It was therefore difficult for them to receive health care services.

Information about the health checkup was communicated to the respondents effectively (Table 5). This was an effective means of communication that is part of the informal networks that residents use in accessing health care services^{10, 17)}.

There is unanimity among the respondents that GENKI's activities are necessary. The options chosen by the residents as reasons why they attended the health checkup are shown in Figure 1. These responses underscore the factors that prompted GENKI's formation which are to ease the difficulties foreign residents face in accessing health

care services as well as to help lower the high prevalence of disease in the foreign population.

The remarkably positive responses from the respondents concerning the flow of service delivery, the place and timing of the health checkup, as well as the fact that the current set of medical tests provided is adequate, strongly supports our expectation that GENKI's health checkup is conducted effectively. Moreover, respondents further suggested that GENKI should provide other services (Figure 2) .

Nearly 77% of the respondents did not attend any other health checkup than GENKI's, even though 90% of them were employed. Employers are expected to give their employees health checkups¹⁸⁾ . This situation might be the result of many of them working illegally.

As observed at the health checkup, providing translation assistance eases the language difficulties faced by the residents in accessing health care services as reported by 60.7% of the respondents.

Contrary to our expectation, none of the respondents answered that they access health information through GENKI even though one of GENKI's activities is to collect and provide information on health. This can be identified as a weakness of GENKI, which needs to be addressed.

2. GENKI as an NGO

GENKI was formed in 1998 when the number of foreign residents was increasing in Japan¹⁾ and hence there was need to solve the problems foreigners face in accessing health care services^{9, 10, 11)} .

That the collaboration between GENKI and other NGOs is limited to personal relationships is a weakness which even GENKI recognizes as evidenced by their view that they can perform better if they could get more support from the public, government, other NGOs and foreign residents.

GENKI's annual budget is sufficient to subsidize costs of the health checkup, making them affordable for foreign residents.

One of the main inhibiting factors for foreign residents to fully utilize available health services is financial constraints¹⁷⁾ . GENKI helps to alleviate this problem by providing them with an affordable health checkup. Also they refer and followup on patients who need further examination and diagnoses. This is a positive measure of public health concern to prevent and control the spread of infectious diseases.

3. GENKI staff

GENKI core staff comprises not only medical workers

but individuals from other professions as well to enable GENKI to get input from various sectors of workers. Most of GENKI's staff interviewed has been working with GENKI since the organization was established, therefore their opinions can be used as a reliable source in assessing GENKI's activities.

All the staff reported that GENKI's activities are needed and the reasons are shown in Table 8. These reasons agree with the problems which foreign residents face in accessing health care⁷⁾ . Four of them answered that there is need to expand the coverage of the health checkup. One answered that the activities should not be expanded but that the quality of the present activities should be improved. Therefore most of the staff wants GENKI's activities to be improved. The other respondent who answered that the activities should not be expanded gave the reason that foreign residents should better take care of themselves and improve abilities to solve their own health problems¹⁰⁾ . Five of the staff members are not satisfied with present GENKI's activities. This is both a weakness and opportunity for GENKI.

4. Kawaguchi PHC

The perception of the Kawaguchi PHC of GENKI's activities is that on humanitarian grounds they are necessary. In addition to this, having realized that foreigners have no chance of getting health consultation, the PHC considers GENKI's activities as an important control measure against TB^{2, 3, 14)} . Based on the above perception, the PHC has consistently been working with GENKI since 1998. That the PHC considers GENKI's activities necessary is a strength and opportunity for GENKI.

From the above findings, foreign residents' immigration status limits their access to health care services. It is difficult for the PHC to help foreigners who have overstayed their legal visas. GENKI has activities to address this gap. That these activities are needed is a view shared not only by GENKI and foreigners, but by the PHC as well.

It is hoped that with the unanimity and GENKI's desire to expand its activities coupled with support from the government and public, the health care needs of foreigners will be met.

5. Limitations of the study

1. Our sample size of foreigners is not representative of the parent population, i.e., all foreign residents of Kawaguchi. It is difficult to get a representative sample, since those who attend the health checkup are selected and

determined by GENKI.

2. On the day of the health checkup the turn out was lower than expected.

V. CONCLUSION

GENKI's activities are needed.

1. GENKI communicates effectively with foreign residents about its health checkup.
2. GENKI's health checkup is an affordable health service for foreign residents.
3. Though GENKI wishes to expand its services, the current set of tests provided may be maintained since both the recipients and providers of the health checkup said it was sufficient.
4. GENKI's strengths are:
 - Strong consensus among GENKI and its collaborators that GENKI's activities are needed.
 - GENKI's staff consists of different professionals.
 - Willingness of community leaders of foreign residents to work with GENKI.
5. GENKI's weaknesses and opportunities are:
 - Ineffective means of disseminating health information.
 - Limited collaboration with other NGOs.
 - Disagreements among core staff on future directions of their activities.
6. GENKI's threat is:
 - Poor public and government support.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. GENKI should consider emphasizing health information as part of its activities.
2. GENKI should expand its services to provide translation services, more frequent health checkups and counseling.
3. GENKI should collaborate with other NGOs to obtain more personnel and facilities.
4. GENKI should seek further support from Kawaguchi PHC for its activities through the prefectural government and taxpayers.

VII. REFERENCES

- 1) Ministry of Justice. Press Resource. Statistical Data on Alien Registration. 2003 <<http://www.moj.go.jp/PRESS/040611-1/040611-1.html>> Access on October 22, 2004.
- 2) Kaguraoka Sumi: Shakai Keizai Jakusha no Kekkaku Kanja ni Taisuru Hokenshi Katsudo. Koushu Eisei. 68 (3) : 181 (21) - 185 (25) , 2004. (Japanese)
- 3) Seki Naomi: Zainichi Gaikokujin eno Kansenshou Taiou. Hokenhu Zasshi. 59 (7) : 668-672, 2003. (Japanese)
- 4) Yamakawa Shigeko: Totsuka Ku ni Okeru Gaikokujin Boshi eno Shien. Chiiki Hoken. 34 (11) : 26-30, 2003. (Japanese)
- 5) Ezaki Miyuki: Boshi Hoken Jigyuu ni Tsuuyaku wo Haichi shite. Chiiki Hoken. 34 (11) : 16-25, 2003. (Japanese)
- 6) Numata Kahoru: Zainichi Gaikokujin Oyako eno Shien ni Tuite Ikuji kouryuu Kai wo Toushite. Hokenhu Zasshi. 55 (10) : 839-843, 1999. (Japanese)
- 7) Nakamura Yasuhide: Zainichi Gaikokujin Kosodate Shien. Shouni Hoken Kenkyu. 62 (2) : 193-197, 2003. (Japanese)
- 8) Otsuru Jiro, et al: Oral Health Status in Migrant Workers. Kouku Eisei Gakkai Zasshi. 53 (1) : 30-37, 2003. (Japanese)
- 9) Tsutsui Yuriko: Boshi Hoken Kosodate Shien Jigyuu Smile Project wo Toushite. Chiiki Hoken. 34 (11) : 31-41, 2003. (Japanese)
- 10) Sawada Takashi: Zainichi Gaikokujin to Chiiki Hoken SHARE no Torikumi. Koushu Eisei. 66 (11) : 834 (36) -836 (38) . 2002. (Japanese)
- 11) Kojima Hirohiko: Zainichi Gaikokujin no Iryou Soudan no Bunseki —Gaikokujin Iryou Centre no Kiroku kara. 25: 129-135, 2002. (Japanese)
- 12) Kawaguchi City Office. Statistical Data Kawaguchi. 2004<http://web.city.kawaguchi.saitama.jp/ka/web_p01.nsf/doc/jinkou1?OpenDocument> Access on October 22, 2004.
- 13) Saitama Prefecture Office. Statistical Data Saino Kuni. 2004 <<http://www.pref.saitama.jp/A01/BP00/index.html>> Access on October 22, 2004.
- 14) Nomoto Chikao: NGO to Kawaguchi Hokenjo no Kyousai ni yoru Zainichi Gaikokujin Kenkou Soudankai. Koushu Eisei. 63 (3) : 199-202, 1999. (Japanese)
- 15) GENKI (Global Emigrants Network in Saitama) <<http://www.tonan.jp/genki/>> Access on October 22, 2004.
- 16) Ministry of Justice. Press Resource. Statistical Data on Alien Registration. 2003 <<http://www.moj.go.jp/ENGLISH/preface.html>> Access on October 22, 2004.
- 17) AJ Mwakatobe, et al: Health Services Access & Health Problems among Foreign Residents in the Kawaguchi Area. Journal of NIPH. 53 (1) : 83-86, 2004
- 18) Kozo Tatara, Etsuji Okamoto: Public Health of Japan 2003. Japan Public Health Association.