



ACPF and Community-based Treatment of Offenders

IMAFUKU Shoji
Director-General
Rehabilitation Bureau
Ministry of Justice

Twenty years ago when I worked as a UNAFEI professor, I learned from Mr. Shikita, then chairperson of the ACPF, the significance of an integrated approach among investigative agencies, the courts, institutional corrections and offender rehabilitation in the community setting by sharing their “main purpose”, and development of international criminal justice networks with the United Nations as the core. Meanwhile I was impressed very much with the many ACPF members working hard to support the development of networks in Japan and around the world through their heartfelt welcoming of overseas criminal justice practitioners and their support for the practitioners’ training and research.

After that, ACPF members have been kind enough to support the administration of community-based treatment of offenders. A good example is the World Congress on Probation, which has been held biannually since the first congress was held in London (2013). The congress is the largest international conference dedicated to the field of community-based treatment of offenders. At the third congress in Tokyo (2017), we received invaluable cooperation from the ACPF and the Volunteer Probation Officers Association in Support of UNAFEI’s Activities including administrative support, home visit programs with Japanese VPOs (hereinafter referred to as “*hogoshi*”), and holding networking events for the participants.

At the Fourteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (the Kyoto Congress) to be held in Kyoto in March 2021, we are planning to hold the “World Congress for Community Volunteers Supporting Offender Reintegration” – which is an expansion of the previously held Asia VPOs Meeting – as a side event of the Kyoto Congress to broaden the importance of community volunteers, including through *hogoshi* systems, throughout the world. The *hogoshi* system not only shows the empowerment of the community as the key to achieving sustainable criminal justice, but also serves as a chance to establish communities

without disparity or isolation by reinforcing the indispensable bond of mutual support in society in accordance with the legal system and culture in each country. During the World Congress, we are also coordinating the adoption of a declaration to call for the establishment of the International Day for Community Volunteers Supporting Offender Reintegration (“HOGOSHI Day”) as an international day recognized by the UN. I greatly appreciate your support.

Prevention of reoffending and rehabilitation of ex-offenders requires a place to live and an appropriate job for each ex-offender. We are now making efforts to provide them with employment assistance with the goal of achieving stable employment. In this regard, I encourage all businesses to consider becoming cooperating employers, which involves hiring those who have criminal records.

The other day, we held a meeting with representatives in the business sector, which included Mr. SAKAKIBARA Sadayuki, chairperson of the National Organization for Employment for Offenders and president emeritus of the Japan Business Federation (Keidanren). During the meeting, we reaffirmed that community-based treatment of offenders and the Sustainable Development Goals in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by the UN have common aims for establishing an inclusive society where “no one will be left behind”. I believe in a recently developed measure called “collaboration of agriculture and social welfare” as a revolutionary and remarkable approach through which companies conduct branding support to provide ex-offenders with job opportunities and “a life worth living” in the agricultural sector.

We must not forget the importance of “encounters with reliable persons and social bonds” to the rehabilitation of offenders. Social isolation is a major factor which leads people toward reoffending. *Hogoshi* in Japan provide advice with cordial care to offenders by patiently listening to their voices and considering their unstable feelings. It is a tough job. However, *hogoshi* sometimes say that they are able to learn from offenders and grow, which makes me think of how profound the activities of *hogoshi* are. Nonetheless, it is a worrying situation that the number of *hogoshi* is decreasing year by year. Since the *hogoshi* system is a part of Japan’s national heritage, we need the active support of society, in particular companies, young people and women, in order to sustain it. I would be grateful if you would kindly consider who in your personal or professional network might be appropriate *hogoshi* candidates.

The activities of *hogoshi*, which go slowly but never backward, are linked to “Prosperity without Crime”. I look forward to pursuing this goal hand in hand with ACPF’s members, businesses and everyone in society.