The Significant Contribution of Volunteer Probation Officers and Other Citizens towards the Rehabilitation of Offenders and a Crime-Free Society in Japan

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Low Crime Rate and Contribution of Citizens

- Crime Rate per 100,000 people
  - Murder: 0.3
  - Theft: 831

- Reported Offenders: 1,314,483
  - 12 consecutive years of decline

- Imprisonment Rate per 100,000 people: 52.55

- Repeated Offender: 60% of Crime are conducted by 30% of Repeated Offenders
Extensive Participation & Cooperation of Citizens in Japanese Probation

Ministry of Justice, Japan

Probation Offices

Volunteer Probation Officers (VPOs) (47,914)

Halfway House (Offenders Rehabilitation Facilities) (103)

Women’s Association for Rehabilitation Aid (WARA) (172,642)

Big Brothers and Sisters Associations (BBS) (4,514)

Cooperative Employers (12,603)

Parolees & Probationers (40,000)

(As of April 2014)

Who is a VPO? (1)

**Legal Status**

Citizen-volunteers appointed by the Minister of Justice
Status as part-time government officials

**(Qualification)**

(1) The person is highly evaluated in terms of character and conduct in the community
(2) The person is enthusiastic and has enough time available to accomplish the necessary duties
(3) The person is financially stable
(4) The person is healthy and active

(Art. 3, Volunteer Probation Officers Act)
Who is a VPO? (2)

Term of Office
2 years
Reappointment is possible

Reimbursement
No salary paid
All or a part of the expenses incurred in discharging their duties may be reimbursed

Age-limit for the first appointment 66 years
Age-limit for reappointment under 76 years

The number of VPOs: 47,914 (as of 1 January 2014)
(The maximum number fixed by law: 52,500)
Their average age: 64.6 years
The percentage of females: 26.0%
Main Activities of VPOs

(1) Supervise & Assist Probationers & Parolees
(2) Coordinate the Social Circumstances of Inmates
(3) Promote Crime Prevention Activities


Rehabilitation Bureau, Ministry of Justice JAPAN
http://www.moj.go.jp/ENGLISH/index.html
The Role of PPOs & VPOs in Probationary Supervision

Working together

**Probation Officer (PO)**
- Making treatment plans
- Interviewing
- Delivering special treatment programmes
- Prob./Prl. violations
- Liaising with relevant agencies

**Volunteer Probation Officer (VPO)**
- Interviews on a regular basis
- Working with their families
- Helping them find jobs
- Liaising with local social resources

**Guidance**
- Monthly report

**Consultation**


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Advantages of VPOs

(1) Local Character
- Immediate Contact
- “Neighbours” rather than “Representatives of government”
- Utilizing community resources

(2) Personal Interaction with Offenders
- Genuine & Warm Concern
- Pro-social Modelling
- Focus on Offenders’ Strengths
- Encourage Offenders’ Rehabilitation with Patience & Trust

(3) Continuous Support
- Continuous Contact with Offenders & Their Family Members since Prison Term
- Relationship Continues as Members of the Same Community
The boy himself (description)

- “I was afraid that I might commit a theft again after leaving the juvenile training school.”

- “Although nobody listened to me seriously before, I was very pleased because the volunteer probation officer listened to me very carefully.”

- “I was happy that many persons have cared for me with kindness and sympathy so far, and that I was able to work hard without betraying them.”

Offenders regain self-esteem, responsibility, identity as law-abiding citizens
The re-offending rate of the unemployed person is at a higher level than that of the employed.

7.5% Employed
29.8% Unemployed

About 4 times

Source: Annual Report of Statistics on Rehabilitation

Cooperative Employers

Private-sector businesses that employ adult offenders & juvenile delinquents regardless of their criminal record or history of crime

12,603 Registered Cooperative Employers in Japan (as of 1 April 2014)
Providing Job Opportunities

- Cooperation between MOJ and MHLW
- Encouraging Cooperative Employers to employ Probationers and Parolees
  (By monetary support, following up with both Employers and Employees and other means.)
- Increasing the number of Cooperative Employers
- Encouraging the business community to cooperate
  (Establishment of the National Organization for Employment of Offenders)
Conclusions

1. Offender rehabilitation in Japan has been supported by active participation of citizens.

2. In order to prevent re-offending, the extensive involvement of citizens such as Volunteer Probation Officers & Cooperative Employers is essential.

3. Supporting citizens who cooperate with community-based treatment should be emphasized.
Thank You Very Much for Your Attention!