

Zenkyo calls for drastically increasing the number of teachers

In Japan, according to a government survey, the average amount of teachers' overtime is 3 hours and 32 minutes a day or 77 hours and 44 minutes a month. Such long working hours put more than 30% of elementary school teachers and more than 60% of junior high school teachers at risk of death from overwork. Teachers are paid only additional 4% of their basic monthly salary for overtime in Japanese system, and this system has not improved for many years.

Deaths of teachers due to excessively long working hours have become a major issue in Japan these days. Ministry of Education、Culture、Sports、Science and Technology (hereafter MEXT) could no longer ignore this issue and announced a policy to introduce a "variable working hours system" as well as submitted the bill to the Diet in the fall of 2019.

The variable working hours system is a system that allows employees to make workers work more than 8 hours a day during a specified period but at the same



time prohibits employers from making workers work more than 40 hours per week on average annual working hours. This system cannot come into force unless a union and management conclude a collective agreement and notify the Labor Standards Inspection Office.

While the variable working hour system may be effective in occupations that have an off season and a busy season, Zenkyo thinks Japanese teachers who have so much work to do even in school holidays do not fit it.

Zenkyo shares problems of the variable working hours system with parents and citizens through SNS and claims that teachers' overwork can only be improved by increasing the number of teachers. It also expands an online petition demanding that the government increase teachers drastically in order not to introduce this system to all schools.



Stop Revision of Article 9 !

65,000 people from all over Japan assembles on Constitution Memorial Day

On May 3(Constitution Memorial Day), nationwide actions such as rallies and marches take place every year to protect the Constitution of Japan.

Record-high 65,000 people participated in the 2019 rally



in Tokyo and celebrated Constitution Memorial Day.

Zenkyo' s various efforts to protect the Constitution

The Abe administration approves to exercise collective defense rights and aims to allow the Japan Self-Defense Forces to use weapons in the war that allies started. That is why they are eager to amend Article 9 of the Constitution that prohibits the right to collective self-defense.

Zenkyo calls for teachers across the country to work on signatures, study sessions and peace education



regarding the Constitution of Japan. It also organizes Constitution Struggle Exchange Meeting once a year to exchange the efforts of teachers in each prefecture so that their activities can be enhanced. At the meeting held in February 2020, many participants shared their

experiences through a panel discussion.



Zenkyo is now making a strong effort to spread a new urgent

signature to prevent the Abe administration's amendment to Article 9 of the Constitution.

Zenkyo' s leader visits KTU in South Korea

President Masako Obata and Vice President Isao Hijikata visited the office of Korean Teachers and Education Workers Union (KTU) in Seoul on May 29, 2019. KTU and Zenkyo have exchanges since 2004. Zenkyo invited KTU' s leader to an international symposium organized in 2017.

President Obata and Vice President Hijikata held talks with 4 officers of KTU, including President Kwon Jong-woo, for more than two hours.

They exchanged information on the current situation of education in Japan and South Korea as well as the

struggles of each unions such as: opposing a neoliberal education policy; realizing tuition-free education; improving teachers' long working hours.

Finally, President Kwon stated that



it was necessary for the both Korean and Japanese teachers' unions, whose ethnic origin was the same, to work together, and his words encouraged the two officers of Zenkyo greatly.

Participants from all over Japan have discussions in “Education Forum 2019”



About 5,000 parent, citizens, and teachers participated in the “Education Forum 2019” from August 16 to 18 in

Shiga Prefecture. This annual gathering is organized by an organizing committee consisting of Zenkyo and 24 educational and civic groups to discuss education related issues.

One particularly important issue taken up by participants

was that Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended the Japanese government to take steps for suicide, abuse and corporal punishment of children as a comprehensive child protection policy and pointed out an overly competitive system in Japan.

In 7 thematic forums and 31 workshops, participants became aware the importance of expanding activities that parent, citizens, and teachers could talk and learn together.

For a World without Nuclear Weapons

The 2019 World Conference against A&H Bombs was held from August 3 in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, participated in by 86 overseas delegates from 21 countries. Attendees earnestly discussed “For a Peaceful and Just World without Nuclear Weapons” and also reported many domestic and international efforts.

During the Conference, Zenkyo organized “Teachers Forum for Peace” . About 80 teachers at the forum listened to Hibakusha’ s testimonies from their families. They also learned about the efforts of overseas delegates such as art activities with children in the hope

of peace and peace education using origami paper cranes in juvenile prison as well as were very impressed by those stories.

At the end of the forum, participants



promised to continue to actively take part in the International Signature Campaign in Support of the Appeal of the Hibakusha which already signed by more than 10.5 million people worldwide and to send more signatures to World Conference 2020 in New York.

Zenkyo calls on Government to take measures against the new coronavirus (COVID-19)



Prime Minister Abe on February 27 requested each school boards to temporarily close all schools from March 2 for about a month to

contain the spread of the new coronavirus outbreak. Teachers and students are very confused by this request

because in March, the last month of a school year, many schools have memorable events like a graduation ceremony, and many students decide what to do after graduation. Parents say uneasily that they won’ t be able to take a day off work and that their living will become difficult due to a decrease in income.

Zenkyo emphasizes that the government and MEXT should make full use of the knowledge of experts,

understand wishes and conditions for each school, and take emergency measures to provide financial support. And it also states it's urgent for the government to supply children with a place where they can stay safe while schools are closed.

For securing the health and safety of children, Zenkyo

demanded MEXT allocate a necessary budget responsibly as well as quickly establish systems to give COVID-19 tests to persons who may be infected with the virus and offer counseling service counters for everyone to use.

Donations to children and schools affected by heavy rain disaster

In 2019, extremely large typhoon, Hagibis and Bualoi, brought about record-breaking heavy rains in the main island of Japan, causing widespread damage, injuries, and death. Rivers overflowed and burst their banks, resulting in inundation in many locations, as well as over 90 people were killed and more than 30,000 homes were heavily damaged.

Zenkyo worked to determine the extent of the damage to children and teachers in disaster-stricken areas and collected contributions for them from its members all over the country. The officers of Zenkyo also handed the contributions to school boards and schools that were particularly damaged as well as listened to the serious

condition and the demand of the victims. Victims said,



“Flood waters reached 2m, so first floor classrooms could not be used” , “I

teach using the classroom of other schools” , “Earth, sand and trees flowing down from the mountain behind the school and crashed through the walls of the school gymnasium.”

Zenkyo will continue to work on the reconstruction of the disaster area.

9 years after, disaster-hit areas still suffer delay in rebuilding efforts

Nine years have passed since the Great East Japan Earthquake, children who entered elementary school that year graduated from junior high school this spring. Still, the Japanese government does not provide sufficient support to the disaster victims, so their livelihoods remain serious. The government also can't say for certain when the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant will be decommissioned.

Zenkyo conduct a study tour to “see, walk, and think in disaster-hit areas” every year after the earthquake, and 30 teachers participated in the seventh tour in 2019. Participants visited the Yuriage district of Miyagi Prefecture that were heavily damaged by the tsunami, and Namie Town, Fukushima Prefecture where all the people were forced to evacuate due to the nuclear power plant

accident.

Zenkyo also invited children in Fukushima to Tokyo to be able to play outside without worrying about radiation. 40 children from Iwaki City, Fukushima Prefecture participated and enjoyed playing in the river and had barbecue.

Zenkyo will continue to listen to children's wishes and requests regarding



education in the disaster-stricken areas, and ask the government to take swift action against them.