

## 5 Backgrounds for the Consideration of ‘Vision on Children and Childcare’

### (Consideration of working teams)

In October 2009, the ‘working team for vision on children and childcare (tentative)’ (hereafter referred as the ‘working team’) were established with the central focus on the three political upper divisions in charge of social affairs of the Cabinet Office. The working team started its discussion by interviews from experts, business persons, local government personnel involved in childcare support etc. The interviews were carried out by members of the ‘project team for countermeasures to the declining birth rate starting from zero’ (February-June 2009), operators of ECEC (type of daycare centre), local government personnel involved in child care support, economic organizations and labour unions etc.

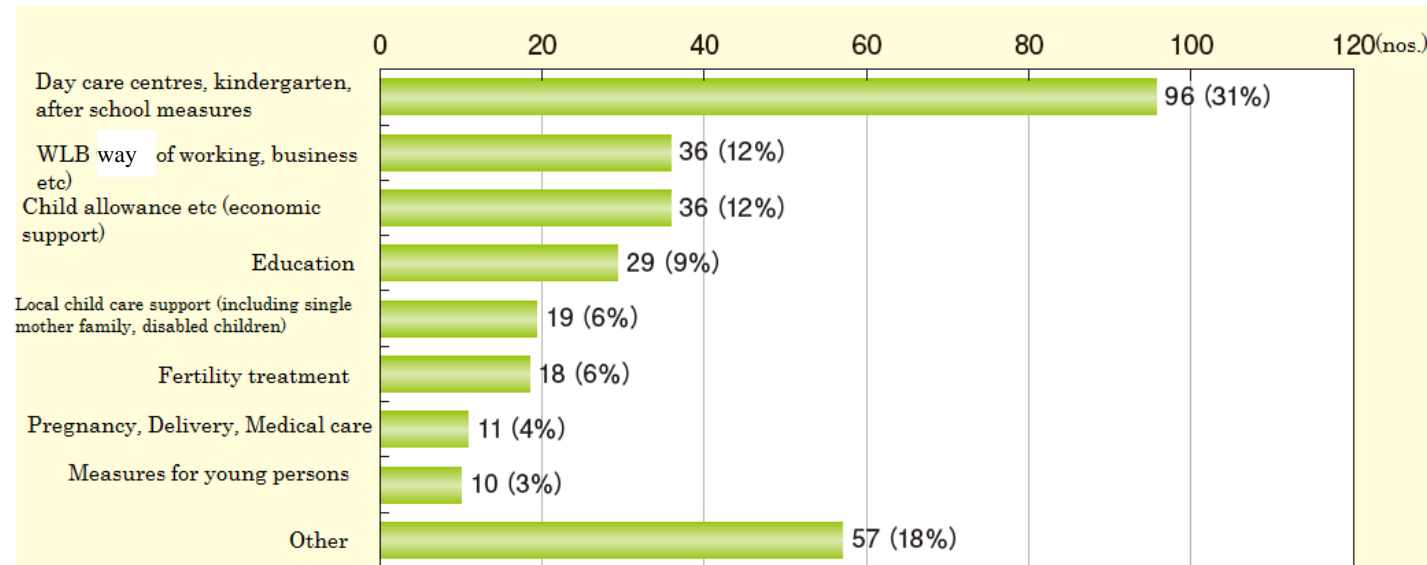
Further, the team visited nursery canthers, certified day care centres in Tokyo; child care facilities using closed schools, centres for ECEC for understanding the actual situation of wait listed children inclusive latent needs of care. Further, it was found that the problem of wait listed children was serious in Okinawa since the non certified day care centres were in the large quantity.

### (Public opinion for future measures of children and childcare)

The wide range of public was asked their opinion to formulate the vision (16/10/2009~11/11/2009). Among the opinions collected, the opinions for the ‘day care centre, kindergarten, after school measures’ were largest at 96 (31%), followed by opinions on the ‘work-life balance’ and ‘child allowance etc. (economic support)’ were at 36 (12%) respectively. This public opinion survey shows that the demands were strong for the benefit in kind such as a day care service along with cash benefits such as the child allowance etc.

Diagram

Public opinion for children, child care support measures in the future (Total 312nos.)



Note: When a single opinion of a person contains a lot of answers, the most important opinion is to be taken into consideration.

### (Significance of ‘vision on children and childcare’)

Based on the review of measures discussed above demanded children and childcare measures, current status of the marriage, delivery, discussion and public opinion survey carried out by the working team, the vision was formulated targeting the points as described below.

- 1) To clarify basic concepts and principles of new children and childcare support etc. based on the current situation of the children and childcare
- 2) To focus on the important measures for next 5 years and to incorporate ‘numerical targets’ including nursery care service.
- 3) To raise the momentum to support the childcare in the society overall by cooperation and coordination between states and locals

## Section 2 Summary of ‘Vision on Children and Childcare’

### 1 Society which Supports Children and Childcare

The ‘vision on children and childcare’ (hereafter referred as ‘vision’) is, based on the basic concept of ‘children first’ shifting the perspective from the ‘countermeasures against declining birthrate’ to the ‘children and childcare support’, as well as supports childcare by overall society, targets the ‘balancing life, work and childcare’(the vision aims to support children and childcare with all its efforts for the children of the next generation to grow stronger and healthier, for the society full of smiling children.)

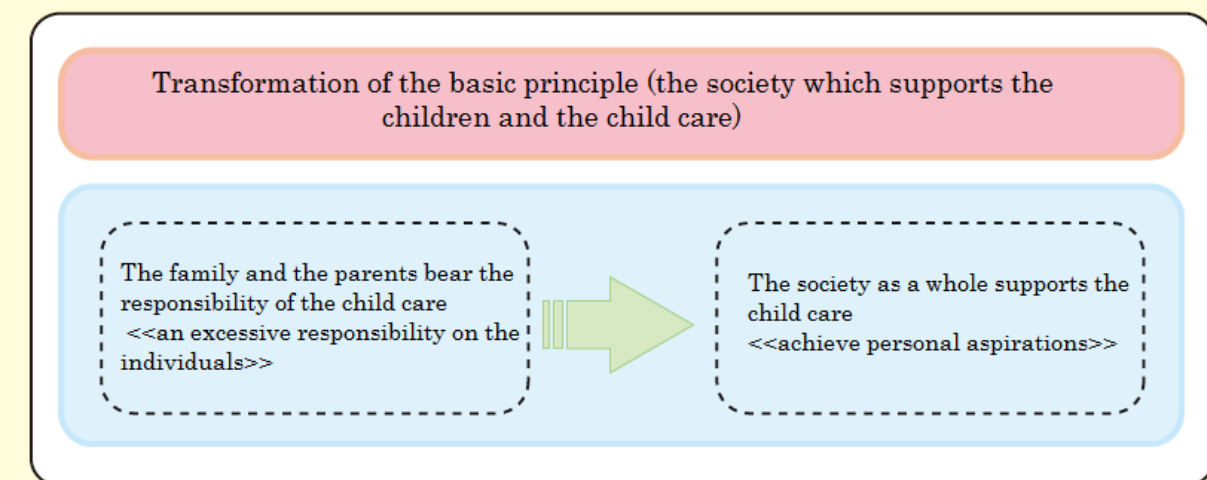
#### 1) ‘Children first’

A declaration is made in the vision ‘to create a society cherishing a child’ based on the basic concept of children first. To achieve that,

- Not only a family and parents alone should not strive for the childcare, but overall society should support for children and childcare
- Children should be positioned as important members of the society and these children and the childcare should be supported by overall society, including the state, local area, business (work place), neighbourhoods, NPOs, families, individuals etc.
- Recently, a child who require special support are increasing in accordance with being diversified of a household and family structure, status of the employment of the parents, individual lifestyles. Consequently, based on the convention on the rights of a child, all the children should be valued and the upbringing of a child should be equally secure.

Diagram

Transformation of the Basic Principles ( A society which supports the children and child care)

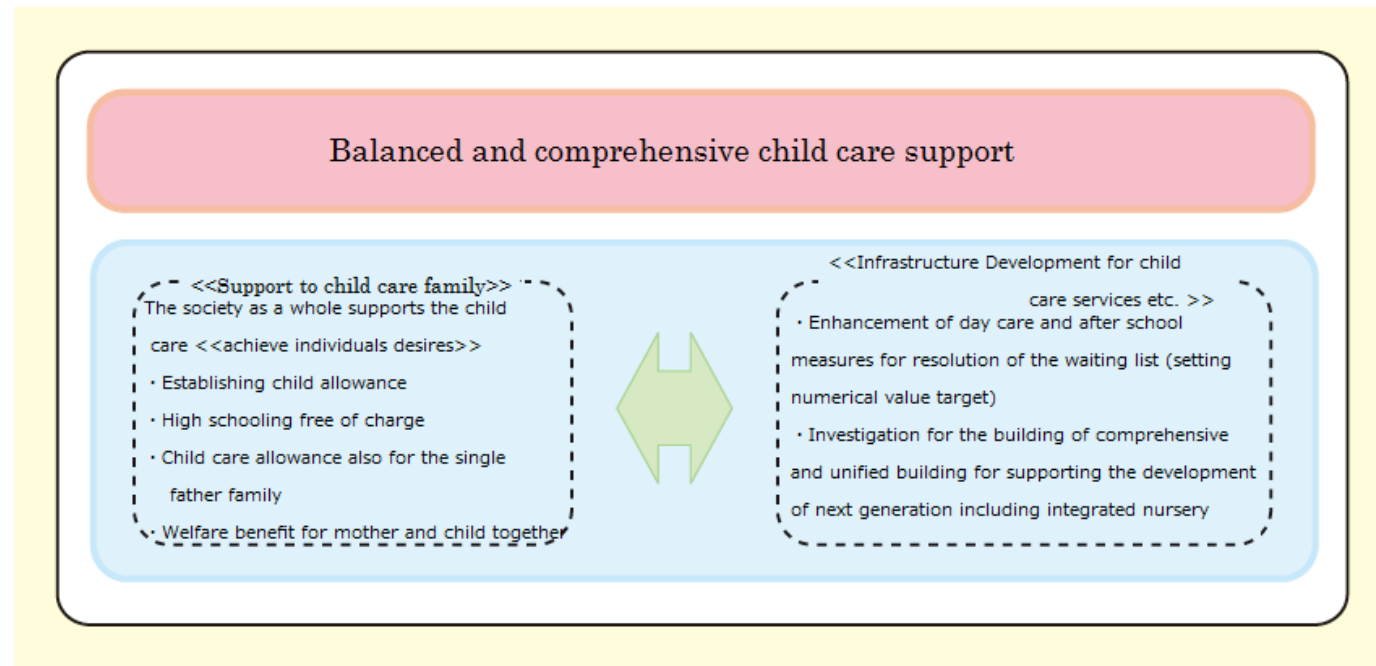


2) From 'countermeasures against declining birthrate' to 'children and childcare support' 15

In the past, various plans were formulated and countermeasures were taken as the 'countermeasures against declining birthrate', however, it is difficult to recognize its tangible results in a daily life. Therefore, in the vision, the perspective has been changed from the 'countermeasures against declining birthrate' to the 'children and childcare support' and environment of the education, work and life in the society overall which the individuals normally take for granted, is streamlined, from the viewpoint of the concerned parties such as the children and the parents who take care of children, giving the first priority to the youth and child care and child care support.

Diagram

Balanced and comprehensive child care support



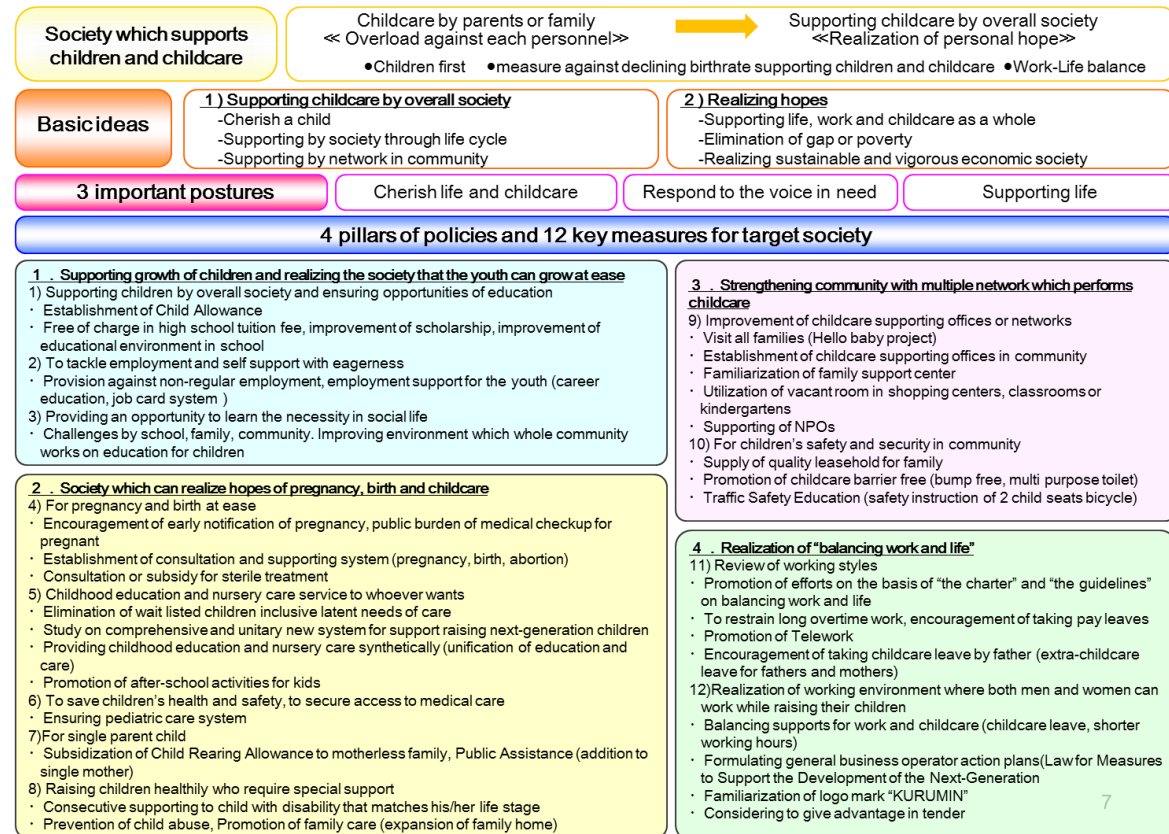
16 3) Balancing life, work and childcare

A growth of children, childcare, personal life, work can not be considered as separate entities, and further, the roles of a man and a woman at home and work also must be considered at the same time. Consequently, the vision strives to promote the measures and close coordination between 'gender equality', 'work-life balance', 'children and youth development assistance' for taking ahead 'children and childcare support'.

Diagram

Summary of children and child care vision

"Vision on Children and Childcare" (decided by the Cabinet on January 29, 2010)



## 2 Basic Idea

### 1) Supporting childcare by overall society

(Based on the idea of ‘cherish a child’.)The vision is aimed at respecting a diversity in children no matter what type they are is and ensuring equal rights for the children like the right to live, the right to grow, the right to learn by offering support in the difficult situations,

Also, growth and childcare all the children, irrespective of the diverse family types or the employment status of the parents should be comprehensively given ‘social support throughout the life cycle’ in a seamless manner.

Further, it also aims at strengthening regional childcare by taking an advantage of respective characteristics of the region, ‘supporting by regional networks’ and reclamation of the area.

### 2) Legalizing hopes

The vision aims at a society which cherishes the dream to raise a child based on the basic idea of ‘comprehensive support for life, work, childcare’ in terms of achieving a marriage, pregnancy and childcare as per individual hopes.

The relative poverty rate of those who have children was 12.2% as per the 2007 survey, and it was 54.3% for single parent families. Further, when a comparison of the relative poverty rate in OECD countries is reviewed, Japan still ranks the highest amongst the OECD countries, and its improvement has become an issue. Therefore, it aims at eliminating disparity and poverty, and creating a society in which there is not any disparity from the starting stage of a life due to an economic strength of a parent and a childhood growth environment, and in which there is no fixed gap across the generations.

Further, it aims at achieving a society in which a man and a woman will respect each other’s rights and share a responsibility, and a society with gender equality in which a man and a woman can fully exercise their individualities and abilities irrespective of their gender. It also aims at realising ‘a society with sustainable and vibrant economy’ by ensuring the participation of all the people including youth, women, elderly people, disabled with the willingness and ability, in the society.

## 3 Three Important Postures

The vision states the ‘3 important postures’ for carrying out the support measures for children and childcare, as described below.

### 1) Cherish a life and childcare

It is important to ‘Cherish a Life and Childcare’ by giving an importance to the rights of each and every child to live happily, to grow and to learn. It promotes the development of the environment for protecting the safe and secure pregnancy and delivery and health of a child and strives to secure a smooth upbringing and opportunities for an education for all the children by establishing child allowance and free of charge high schooling.

### 2) Respond to those who in need

It is important to resolve an anxiety of a child and families caring for the children and respond to those who in need. Therefore, it aims to promote the development of an environment which will provide adequate service to the families with children that cannot enrol in a day care centres or children which do not have any place to stay after the school. Further, it respects a diversity of the status of each and every child (inclusion), supports to secure living of children a single parent family or disabled children for whom a special support is required, and prevents widening poverty and a disparity of children.

### 3) Supporting life

It is important to support a family and a community life from a viewpoint of youth and children. Therefore, it aims to support for working, life and independence of the youth and to ensure the smooth transition of children and youth to the community life.

Further, it aims to implement balancing work and life and to achieve a society which enables a woman not to leave her job due to delivery and childcare, and to return to her work smoothly after the delivery and childcare. Therefore it is essential to improve promoting the way of working styles of working and a work environment, by resolving the ‘M-shaped curve’.

## 4 4 Principle Policies and 12 Key Measures for Target Society

Based on three important postures, the initiatives are taken following the ‘4 principle policies for the ideal society’ and ‘12 key measures’ as described below.

### 1) Supporting growth of children and realizing a society that the youth can grow at ease

#### (1) Supporting children by overall society and ensuring opportunities of education

It supports the children of the next generation by establishing of child allowance and supports the learning of children by free of charge in high school tuition fee, improvement of scholarship. Further, it addresses improvement of educational environment in school for cultivating the way of living of the children and enabling the children to study peacefully.

#### (2) To tackle employment and self-support with eagerness

It implements provision against the non-regular employment (promote transition to regular employment, correct compensation packages for non-regular employment etc.) and a support for the youth employment (employment support for freeters for the career education, ‘job café’ etc.).

Further, it addresses support to the children and youth which have difficulties such as stop-at-home or NEET based on ‘promotion for supporting the children and youth education’.

#### (3) Providing an opportunity to learn the necessity in a social life

It cultivates the understanding of an importance of life, roles in the family based on various household and family structures through the initiatives of schools, families, and regions.

Further, it develops the environment for the education of the children in the whole community, and forms a well-rounded character through the learning and play experiences by providing the opportunities to come in contact with the culture, artistic activities and nature.

### 2. Society which can realize hopes of pregnancy, birth and childcare

#### (4) For pregnancy and birth at ease

It secures a support for a pregnancy and delivery, and a perinatal care system (including the obstetricians, midwives etc.) by alleviation of economic burden for the gynaecological check-up and delivery, development of the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) etc., establishment of consultation and supporting system(pregnancy, birth, abortion) etc.

Further, it also addresses the support to a sterile treatment by a consolation or subsidy for the sterile treatment, irrespective of the gender.

#### (5) Childhood education and nursery care service to whoever wants

It plans to eliminate wait listed children inclusive latent needs of care, enhance the various nursery care services (extended day care, holidays and overnight child care, sick children day care, in-office day care etc.),to maintain day care facilities in the regions with declining population and to improve the quality of early childhood education and day care.

In addition, it studies on comprehensive and unitary new system for support raising next generation. In this case, it also studies for providing childhood education and nursery care synthetically (unification of education and care), and draws a conclusion.

Further, it promotes for after-school activities for kids, improves the after school activity club, and addresses the after school measures for improving of these services.

#### (6) To save children’s health and safety, to secure access to a medical care

It develops a children medical system for enabling children to get medical treatment with a certain fee to a hospital and children to see a medical practitioner.

Further, it ensures children’s health and safety by for the mental health, promotion of ‘dietary education’, prevention of child accidents etc.

#### (7) For a single parent child

It supports single parent families by enhancing of the child allowance and livelihood support, employment support, economical support (supply child care allowance also to single father families).

#### (8) Raising children healthily who require special support

It addresses a support to a child with disability by consecutive supporting that matches his/her life stage, supporting an education and childcare for them.

Further, it also aims to enhance a social care by a promotion of a foster parent and family homes, an expansion of family care including small scale facility care units, supports to abused children as well as preventing child abuse.

In addition, it supports the children who require special attention like children of foreign residents.

### 3. Strengthening community with multiple network which performs childcare

#### (9) Improvement of childcare supporting offices or networks

It addresses the implementation of visit all families with a baby (Hello baby project), establishment of childcare supporting offices in community, for promotion familiarization of family support centre, the utilization of vacant rooms in shopping centres, classrooms or kindergartens.

Further, it promotes using the strength of local residents, support of local organizations, and intergenerational exchange through supporting NPOs, training volunteers, and using elderly people.

#### (10) For children’s safety and security in community

It addresses the keeping of residential living environment for the childcare by promoting the supply of quality leasehold for family, implementation of the integrated development of public rental houses and childcare support facilities.

Further, it promotes a barrier-free society for raising child so that children can live freely and safely by expanding barrier free buildings, public transportation, and parks etc., developing a safe traffic environment, promoting things suitable for children (promotion of kids design), and a traffic safety education.

#### **4. Realization of 'work-life balance'**

##### **(11) Review of working styles**

It addresses the environment for review of working styles by long overtime work, encouraging taking paid leaves, promoting various styles of working corresponding to a lifestyle, promotion telework.

Further, it promotes the involvement of men in a childcare by encouraging a parental leave.

##### **(12) Realization of working environment where both men and women can work while raising their children**

It supports popularization and establishment of supports for balancing work and childcare including a parental leave and, continued employment and retirements of a woman during child raising by development of a work environment in which the childcare leave and shorter working hours are easily obtained, economic supports during child care leave, and prohibition of the adverse treatment due to a pregnancy and a delivery.

Further, it secures an equal employment opportunity for men and women, realizing a work environment in which men and women can work by exercising sufficient ability at the work place and continue working with peace along with having and raising a child, and promotes equal and balanced compensation package for 'equal value work – equal pay'.

Moreover, it promotes further 'visualization' in a company through changing executives' way of thinking improving awareness of executives and promoting a social valuation toward companies who work positively.

### **5 Promotion Policies for The Initiatives in The Future**

#### **1) The initiatives taken by the government**

Based on this vision, the government strives to promote the policies for achieving a society in which people can have a dream of birth to and rearing babies. Further, it promotes the policies which have integrity and coordination for children and childcare for securing integration and unification of the policies across the ministries and strives to study according to the shop of the ministries ensuring an including an establishment of of 'Ministry of Children and Family (tentative)'.

#### **2) Target figure**

The targets figure described below are considered as targets for the next 5 years with 2014 as a goal.