

Chapter4. Aiming for a society that is harmonious for work and life for both men and women (Realization of work life balance)

Section 1. Review of working styles

1. Developing an Environment with Suppression of Long Working Hours, Adoption of Telework, Revision of the Styles of Work

1) Promotion of Initiatives Based on the Charter for Work-life Balance and the Action Policy for Promoting Work-life Balance

The Action Policy for Promoting Work-life Balance In June 2010, the new Charter for Work-life Balance (hereafter referred to as the ‘charter’) and the Action Policy for promoting Work-life Balance (hereafter referred to as the ‘Action Policy’) were determined by the ‘Council of Executives of Public and Private Sectors to Promote Work-life Balance’ consisting of representatives from economic and labour circles, local governments, experts, related ministers, as agreement between the government, workers and employers. In the new ‘Charter’ and ‘Action Policy’, new concepts, such as ‘new public’ as well as ‘decent work’ have been incorporated, with the numerical targets been set aiming at 2020.

2) Promotion of Suppressing Long Working Hours and Taking Annual Paid Leave.

Based on the ‘Guidelines for Improvement of Working Time Arrangements’, to accelerate voluntary initiatives aimed at improving Working Time Arrangement, such as working hours work-life balance is being promoted.

In 2008 in order to inhibit long working time and make work-life balance possible, the Labor standards act is established in December of the same year and from April 1st 2010, it was determined to increase to 50% from the current 25% for the overtime pay of the overtime work of 60 hours or more in a month.

3) Support and Assistance for the Small to Medium Businesses for the Initiatives of Improvement of Working Time Arrangements

Based on the ‘charter’ and the ‘action plan’, the initiatives for the businesses such as suppression of long working hours, taking annual paid leave is promoted.

4) Securing Choices for the Diverse Styles of Working Corresponding to the Lifestyle

Based on the revised part time employment act enforced from April 2008 (H20), the administrative directives for the business owners are implemented and the compensation package for the normal worker is secured through the subsidy supply for the business owners taking initiative for the balanced compensation package of the part-time worker.

5) Promoting Teleworking

Relevant ministries are working together by developing a ‘New Strategy in Information and Communications Technology(IT)’ in May 2010, placing the contribution and activation of the creation of employment opportunities and community of people who hope for the variety working styles in the ‘promoting teleworking’, aiming for the realization of the goals and seven million people of at-home type teleworkers until 2015, expanding the environment for further spread of telework, and promoting public awareness.

6) Improvement of Work Environment for Women in Agricultural Management
MAFF promoted ‘family management agreements’, investigated actual conditions of women's working styles on their agricultural corporation and held symposiums in order to reduce the workload of women during pregnancy and parenting and facilitate women’s participation in agricultural, forestry and fishery management and community activities.

2. Promoting Relation of Men to Childcare

1) Promoting Acquisition of Childcare Leave for Men (Father, Mother Childcare Leave Plus)

To promote childcare leave for male workers, if requested by both parents to take childcare leave, the following:

1. possibility to take childcare leave for both parents if desired, to extend the period of maternity leave by getting ‘Mama Papa plus childcare leave’ (‘Daddy Quota’ Japan Version),
2. getting promoted within 8 weeks of paternity leave after the birth,
3. by establishing a labor-management agreement, abolition of the system, which may be a non-acquisition of childcare leave when a spouse is a full-time homemaker, the extension of the period of maternity leave can be obtained, etc.

were included into the Childcare and Family Care Leave Act amendment, which came into effect in June 2010.

2) Awareness and Popularization for childcare by Men

Together with the enforcement of the Childcare and Family Care Leave Act amended in June 2010, to increase the number of ‘Ikumen’, men who are actively participating in parenting, the ‘Ikumen Project’ (<http://ikumen-project.jp/>) was started. The government has been creating a social opportunity to make men enjoy childcare more and ease at having childcare leave, for example exposing the Ikumen declaration and the Ikumen supporter declaration in official web sites, and hold symposiums.

3) Consciousness for the Household Work and Childcare by Men

The school education is going to provide guidance about the mutual cooperation and understanding, the equality of men and women as the members in the working life and social participation, the significance of building a home with mutual cooperation between men and women by playing the role as a member of the family etc.

For the initiatives in the family and region, the support is extended to the initiatives mainly implemented by the region such as the education at home for improving the understanding of the parents for the importance of implementing household work and child care by working together.

Section 2. Realization of working environment that enables the coexistence of work and family-care

1. Spread and establishment of coexistent support systems other than childcare leave, along with the support of work continuation, aiming to support re-employment of women raising children

1) Establishment of coexistent support systems of shortened working hours and parental leave

The main contents of the revised Child Care and Family Care Leave Act, which came into effect in earnest from June 30, 2010 are:

1. Mandatory overtime exemptions and mandatory measures of short-time work schemes for workers who takes care of a child up to 3 years
2. As an institution for the promotion of male childcare leave, extension of the period of maternity leave can be obtained if both parents take childcare leave (Papa Mama plus childcare leave)
3. Establishment of short-term vacation for the care, and the like, administrative guidance towards the spread and establishment of the system is been carried out.

2) Development of the Work Environment with Easy to Use Dual Support System

The support is extended to the business owners who take initiatives for development of the work environment in which both work and family can be managed, using the supply of small to medium business grants for childcare. The business owners who have extended unique economic support to the persons taking childcare leave is given a grant for promotion of obtaining childcare leave.

3) Preventing of Disadvantageous Treatment Serving as the Reason for Obtaining Childcare Leave

The government has been responding appropriately to the consultation from workers pertaining to dismissal or other disadvantageous treatment on the grounds of pregnancy, childbirth, and the acquisition of maternity leave before and after childbirth and childcare leave, supervising quickly and strictly for cases where there is suspicion of violating the law, and notifying for preventing from violating the law. In addition, it has been conducting solution aid and medication of disputes by chiefs of labor authorities in prefectures along clients' needs, and promoting solution smoothly and quickly.

4) Promoting Health Management during Pregnancy and after Childbirth

The disseminate information is addressed to the business owners, female workers, medical persons for the maternal health control measures based on the equal employment opportunity act for Men and Women and maternity protection regulations of Labour standards act (2010, Act No. 49) and use of 'Maternal Health Control Guidelines Contact Card' is promoted for conveying the guidelines of the doctor for the female workers, accurately to the business owners.

5) Supporting Re-employment of the Child Caring Women

The relevant ministries are taking efforts working in coordination with each other to implement support measures for supporting reemployment and entrepreneurship of the women who has left her job for the child care, based on the 'Child care re-challenge support plan' (enforced in December 2006 (H18)). The training courses

using time zone of weekends and late evenings are set in the employment competence development facility and the detailed placement assistance in the Mothers job placement office (12 places), Mothers salon (36 places) and Mothers corner (115places), is implemented for the persons who want early employment while carrying out the child care.

6) Supporting Continuing Employment by Securing Equal Employment Opportunity for Men and Women

The guidelines are given to the business owners who are thorough in the average man and woman handling according to the equal employment opportunity act for Men and Women and smooth and rapid solution is addressed according to the conflict resolution assistance by prefectural labor bureau and conciliation by the equal opportunity conciliation conference, for the conflicts between the worker and the business owner.

In addition to promote company's voluntary and active positive action for resolving the differences between men and women workers, women active action propulsion committee by cooperation with employer groups has been conducted, the utilization of the symbol mark 'Kirara' for spreading positive actions has been promoted and the 'award for companies promoting equality and balance' has been conducted.

Furthermore, by establishing the 'Portal Cite on Positive Actions' and introducing the basic initiatives of individual company, the government has been supporting company's activities.

2. Promoting Further Initiatives Using 'Visualization' of the Initiatives in the Company

1) Conscious Reformation of the Business Managers

For efficient work habits that are required in order to achieve work-life balance, the report of the 'survey on efficient work habits for work-life balance', which collect knowhow such as the 'the sending of powerful messages from top of companies' was notified and educational brochure for businesses 'Three things to consider and ten practical steps taken toward the realization of work-life balance' was published in September 2010.

2) Promotion of Formulation and Publishing of the General Action Plan (Act for Measures to Support the Development of the Next Generation)

When the 'Act for Measures to Support the Development of the Next Generation' was amended in December 2008, the publishing and common knowledge to the workers of this plan was mandated. Further, from 1st April 2011, obligation to make, report to labor authority in prefectures, publish and notify to employees the 'general employer action plan on support of employees' work and parenting balance' (hereafter referred to as the 'action plan') will be expanded to the companies with workers 101 or more, from current companies with workers 301 or more. Making well known and enlightenment is enforced to make many companies make and report the action plan.

3) Promotion of the Initiative and Common Knowledge of the Next Generation Certification Mark (Kurumin)

In the act for measures to support the development of the next generation, the companies which satisfy the definite conditions is admitted as 'Parenting Support Company' by the Minister of Health, Labour, and Welfare and can use 'Kurmin

mark'. Along with making the revised law well known, the acquisition of admission of the mark based on the law was promoted.

4) Promotion of Social Review of the Various Efforts of the Company by Award System

Using the compatibility index indicating ease of balancing work and family' in the company, the family friendly company, which carries out initiatives such as systems that enabling dual support for work and child care, nursing, a system in which the worker can choose from the diverse and flexible ways of working, is being popularized and promoted.

5) Dealing with Public Tendering Procedure

From 2010 (H22), the cabinet office has introduced the structure to add point to the companies which positively carry out initiatives for work and life balance, etc., when carrying out tendering according to the general competitive tendering comprehensive evaluation bidding system for the survey related to work-life balance or gender equality.