

# **The Current Status and Possibilities for Japanese-Style “Social Housing” Learning from Assistance for Escaping Homelessness: the post-Homeless Self-support Assistance Law era and a National Minimum for Housing**

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## **1. Introduction**

More than ten years have now passed since aid for escaping homelessness became substantive in Japan. Judging from experiences being involved with aid on the frontline scene, especially from the forefront of aid for transitioning towards apartment life in local communities as a way of escaping homelessness, during those ten years, tiny low-rent apartments, company staff dormitories, and one-room flats have been mobilized as receptacles for habitation in aid for escaping homelessness. And I have been deeply impressed by the fact that by adding on ‘livelihood protection’ (public assistance or low income subsidy) from aid groups for the tenants of such places, the number of spontaneously occurring housing units with aid attached has increased. In most cases the rental fees have been supplied by the housing allowances of ‘livelihood protection’. For these tenants, most of whom are middle-aged or elderly singles, access to public housing is nearly impossible, and these other forms of housing have come to fill the function of “social housing,” using public fund with aid attached to it, and will probably continue to play that role in the future.

On the other hand, the frontline arena for social welfare is mainly social welfare work inside facilities, and the implementation of local community welfare work has only just begun. In the midst of this, aid for escaping homelessness is being dynamically implemented as housing welfare that is surely fostered by the local community, in which welfare and apparently vacant low rent housing units are reused, thus ferreting out the housing resources of the local community. (Proportion of vacant housing units, 13.1%; 7.56 million units as of 2008). Although the context is different from the movement to get the handicapped out of facilities, which arose from the limitations of welfare within facilities, that dynamism is extremely attractive. At the same time, it carries with it the danger of being seen as something like welfare business or poverty business.

The purpose of this paper is to provide a new interpretation for the implementation of this kind of housing welfare in assisting the escape from homelessness by introducing the term “social housing,” and to propose an alternative renewal of the public housing policy that is geared towards the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **II. Private Rental Housing and the Roots of Public Housing Policy**

The term “social housing,” defined as appropriate housing designed for low-income earners has a long tradition in Europe going back to the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, mainly as public utility housing that was provided by non-profit organizations. Such housing was constructed in large numbers on the outer margins of the cities of that time as habitations for many of the migrant laborers. The “social housing” that was provided in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was of fairly high quality and still today provides a comparatively

good residential environment. In Japan's case, massed-together housing units used by low income earners that were like "social housing" existed physically speaking, but they did not exist in actuality as equivalent to Europe's social housing. What I wish to emphasize in this paper is that I am advocating turning the stock of low rent housing units that exist into "social housing." But first we must ascertain what that stock of housing was and what it is now, and unravel the thread of its history in relation to public housing.

What comes into mind as the physical actuality of "social housing" resources can be represented by comparatively good quality *nagaya* or wooden longhouses used laborers in the pre-war period. Due to the fact that many of these were burned down during air raids, their life span was short because they were made of wood, and because of the protection of the tenants' rights under the Land and Buildings Leases Law, one can say that the public utility of this housing management by rental housing landlords did not increase. In the post war period, due to the deteriorating quality of materials, there was a deterioration of the quality of the housing as well, and the construction of *nagaya* of pre-war quality was halted.

From the 1960s through the 1970s, that niche was filled in the private sector by wooden rental apartments that ran as the one-room apartments with shared kitchens and toilets, or as the 2-room 2K style that had kitchens and toilets. However, as many of these were small scale and family-operated, and there were problems with flimsy construction, the fresh provision of such apartments was later halted. Beginning in the 1980s, these were rapidly replaced by a new stock of mid-rise one-room flat and rental apartments in iron-reinforced concrete buildings, and the surviving wood-built rental apartments that were more than 40 years old functioned as housing particularly for low-income earners. However, they did not fall into the category of "social housing" operated under the management of non-profit groups which had public utility.

But this situation changed after the late 1990s. With the appearance of assistance for escaping homelessness, aid became available, and by being able to use public capital such as 'livelihood protection', as the 2000s began, with one stroke the metamorphosis into "social housing" began. The usage of "welfare housing" is widespread, but one dares to say this uses "social housing." In the beginning, those using it were mostly elderly single males, but in recent years the use has increased by a wide range of singles, from young people to the middle-aged and elderly and including women.

From the late 1950s onward, the role of providing "social housing" was established as a public works project by the government with the beginning of mass provision of public housing such as national and local state-run and public corporation housing. In 1980 it became institutionally possible for single elderly people to enter public housing, but use of public housing by low income earners whose housing insecurity was worsening was for a long time impossible in actuality. Along with the adoption of the Ability-to-Pay and Fee-Based Rent System in 1996, relatively low income earners, the elderly, and single-parent households can continue living in, and receive preference for entering public housing. The transition of public housing into welfare housing is under way.

With a total of 2.18 million units nationwide (as of 2010) amounting to a 4.1% share of total housing units (of which central state-run and public corporation housing occupy 1.8%), public housing has strengthened its role as low rent housing aimed at low income earners. However, as before the competition for entry is very high, and except for the public housing provided to former *buraku* (former outcaste people's settlement) residents

as part of the former *buraku* countermeasures, for the most part there are no housing assistance for people in public housing. Consequently, the situation is such that for people with livelihoods at risk who have even lower incomes, public housing does not adequately fill the role of “social housing.”

Various housing policies targeting the elderly by the same Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, and Transport (MLIT) do not directly provide such housing, but by setting up a system of different kinds of incentives, a number of housing systems with the word ‘elderly’ in their title have been created since the late 1980s (“Silver Housing,” created in 1987, at 821 locations; “High Quality Rental Housing for Seniors,” created in 1998, with 35,678 units as of late 2010; “Rental Housing Where Seniors Can Live Easily,” established in 2001, with 87,217 units as of late 2010; and “Rental Housing for Seniors’ Exclusive Use,” established in 2005, with 42,878 units as of late 2009). However, people with no fixed address who are living in very insecure conditions and people with tenuous social relations seem to have been overlooked in the targeted group for using this system (Takeyama Kiyooki, 2009 “Japanese-style Social Housing as Affordable Housing From Now On,” *Jutaku Kaigi*, No. 75, pp. 23-28; Kakuhashi Tetsuya, et al, 2010, “Potential of ‘Japanese-style Social Housing’ After Considering Holland’s Housing Policy,” *Kenchiku to machi-zukuri*, No. 389, pp. 25-30).

As housing resources available to the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare which should be supporting people in such situations of homelessness in the welfare domain, the closest thing to that existing are the public welfare facilities (188 Relief Centers with a capacity of 17,000, and 20 Rehab Centers with a capacity of 1,744 as of 2009). Unfortunately, under the Public Housing Law of 1950, the housing policy proposals of what was then the Ministry of Health and Welfare ended up buried inside those of the Ministry of Construction, and so the actual housing policy of the former Ministry of Health and Welfare amounted to nothing more than a system of Relief and Rehab Centers that were temporary stay transitional facilities for people whose livelihoods were at risk. Under the former Ministry of Labor there are 140,000 units (as of 2008) of ‘Employment Promotion Housing’ that were mainly built for laid off coal miners in the 1960s, but they were meant for entitled people receiving unemployment benefits and so these housing units also until recent years could not be used in aid for escaping homelessness.

From the 1970s on, as the trends were beginning toward normalization and release from facilities for the handicapped, for people being discharged from hospitals or social welfare facilities who could not be integrated into local communities or whose livelihood in the local community was extremely difficult, acceptance into ‘Livelihood Protection’ facilities became possible. The average length of stay in the Relief Centers became as long as 15 years or more (Mizuuchi Toshio, 2010, “‘Livelihood Protection’ Facilities Seen From the Viewpoint of Housing Security and Aid for the Homeless,” *Toshi Mondai*, 101:7, pp. 51-63), they became unlimited terminal dwelling places, and neither entry nor release were easy. The system of aiding people to live in apartments in the local community as much as possible has also been introduced in recent years, but this does not amount to providing the housing resources for people to escape from homelessness.

### **III. Measures Related to the “Homeless Self-Support Assistance Law”**

In the realm of social welfare, housing resources are limited to the social welfare facilities and there has been no thought given to coordination with the policies of the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, and Transport. The means of dealing with the problem of the homeless who became conspicuous in the large urban areas after the late 1990s was not to deal with them through housing policies but to achieve escape from homelessness by having them obtain jobs. For that process, policies were put into effect in the domain of the Community Welfare and Services Division of the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare to utilize “Homeless Self-Support Centers.” The Homeless Self-Support Assistance Law of 2002 was a concrete result of those policies. The problem of homelessness was dealt with by the central government not through the housing policies of the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, and Transport, nor through the policies for employment in the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare’s labor division, but as social welfare policies within that same ministry.

The problem of the homeless is something that basically needs to be dealt with through coordination between the three pillars of employment, housing, and welfare, but the Japanese government’s policy was first to deal with it through the channels of the welfare policy. The authority for administering this law, even within the domain of welfare, was the Community Welfare and Services Division of the Social Welfare and War Victims’ Relief Bureau of the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare. In the case of Japan, ‘livelihood protection’ (welfare) payments have become the ticket for escaping from circumstances of livelihood at risk, and the supervisory division for this is the ‘Livelihood Protection’ Division of the same Social Welfare Bureau. The Community Welfare and Services Division, which arose from the homeless measures budget, became another track apart from the ‘livelihood protection’ payment system for those whose livelihoods were at risk and especially for escaping from homelessness. When the double tracks of ‘livelihood protection’ payments and money for escaping from homelessness measures began to take effect, they were well received in the major cities. As for the budgeted amounts, in the first half of the 2000s, as can be seen in Table 1, they started with a very small budget that was hundreds of times smaller than the cost of ‘livelihood protection’ payments.

Table 1. National Gov’t Budget under the Homeless Self-support Aid Law in million Yen Based on author’s research

fiscal year:	2000	2003	2006	2008	2009	2010	2011
Total expenditures for homeless aid measures	972	2,703	3,304	3,098	6,816	8,096	11,052
Employment Security Bureau portion	80	872	1,191	989	981	992	1,047
Health Bureau portion	0	0	10	5	5	5	5
Social and Relief Bureau portion	892	1,831	2,104	2,104	5,830	7,099	10,000
General Counseling and Outreaching	0	306	317	317	1,037	1,523	2,243
Self-support Aid projects	892	1,035	1,230	1,230	2,460	2,460	3,030
Shelter projects	0	447	444	444	2,109	2,942	3,161

Let me briefly describe how housing resources were dealt with under this law. In the table above, under “Self-support Aid Projects” it was stipulated that they would

concentrate on aid given within facilities, centered around the Homeless Self-support Aid Centers in particular. After securing a job, clients would leave the facility and secure a stable place to live using rental housing... This was the stream that was envisioned. Aid consisting of the direct provision of housing was not specified. Coordination with private organizations, NPOs, was strongly pushed, but in reality neither Free or Low Rent Lodging House that could be used in aid for escaping homelessness nor housing with aid attached appeared specifically in the law's provisions.

In actuality, 20 Homeless Self-Support Centers were established in the major cities. Looking at the figures for "Rate of Discharge After Finding a Job," the best measure of their effectiveness, the figures vary widely from 17.1% to 57.0% (for 2009). Looking at individual centers in individual cities, concerning their thinking about discharge from the facility, at places where finding a job and self-support were the number one goal, from the time they entered, people with a desire to find work were given priority and they were provided with a job finding assistance menu. On the other hand, there were centers that operated with the thinking that concentrated not on just finding a job and discharge, but on discharge after getting 'livelihood protection', or with some combination of 'livelihood protection' and a certain amount of work.

Operations at most of the Homeless Self-Support Aid Centers have been entrusted to social welfare public corporations that have conducted welfare work within facilities. The big difference between these centers and existing social welfare facilities is the fast turnover from entry to discharge, with stays averaging from 2 or 3 months to about half a year. After they leave, the aftercare of discharged clients who are living in the local community on their income from employment and from 'livelihood protection' has become an important task. It is rather difficult for many of them to continue working in their jobs after leaving the centers, and there are many cases that have been seen of clients having their 'livelihood protection' cut off because of absconding or going back to sleeping on the street. At a number of the centers they handle aftercare projects that do not stop at the welfare work within the facility but move out into community welfare. Based on this experience, beginning in 2010 a system was introduced in nearby rental housing is borrowed and clients live there while they are enrolled in the center, as in the 'branches' (borrowed residences) in the 23 wards of Tokyo and the rental housing style of self-support aid centers in Osaka.

In aid for escaping from homelessness, these are stopgap measures, but better forms of assistance that originated in field experience have been developed spontaneously. In the 23 wards of Tokyo, a program of job finding and 'livelihood protection' measures titled "Community Livelihood Transition Assistance Project" was carried out from 2004 to 2010 aimed at people living in tents in public parks in which they were provided with rental apartments and rent subsidies so that they only had to pay ¥3,000 per month in rent for 2 years.

Based on the recognition that the extreme difficulty of finding places to live in the community for people released after serving jail sentences or released on parole is also part of the homeless problem in a wider sense, in a collaboration between the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare, "Aid Centers for Integrating into Community Life" that manage housing and assistance for such people began operating nationwide in 2009. A number of homeless assistance organizations are also involved in the operation of these centers, and are developing aid activities that are particularly

dynamic. In 2011, the “Self-support Prep Homes” system was adopted and private facilities were newly designated as places where people released from jails or reformatories who have no homes to return can live temporarily until they are able to support themselves.

In 2009, the “Residential Living Transition Model Assistance Project” was introduced aimed at Free or Low Rent Lodging houses so that people coming out of these houses could make smooth transitions to living in apartments in the community. This is a project that uses existing lodging houses in order to secure housing for the people living in such houses who are on welfare or people on welfare who find it difficult to secure a place after they leave institutions, and to aid them towards becoming self-supporting. Within the framework of the Homeless Self-support Assistance Law, “Emergency Temporary Lodging Projects” or so-called shelter projects have begun in individual cities starting in 2009. For these, mainly hotels or *ryokan* inns are used (42 locations with a capacity of 663 people as of late 2009).

Undertakings involving temporary transitional stays in Japanese-style “social housing” where it is possible to stay for a while for free or low rent private rental housing in the community while receiving assistance within the framework of the Homeless Self-support Assistance Law have been launched steadily in recent years.

#### **IV. The Confusion and Mixture of Related Legal Proposals and Measures**

In this way, housing with aid attached, which can be backed up by a number of programs set out by the central government while utilizing existing housing resources in the community, has made its appearance. However, the financial resources all come from projects limited in time, and not from projects that are based on permanent legislation. The author believes that it is his task to build a system of housing resources and assistance in the near future whose mechanisms are supported by permanent rather than time-limited legislation.

As Hagiwara describes (Hagiwara Aiichi, 2009, “Is the Housing Safety Net Functioning?— Policies and issues regarding the housing vulnerable,” *Kokudo Kotsu Chosashitsu Reference*, March 2010 issue), regarding the issues representative of the homeless problem, countermeasures are fragmentary and ad hoc manner and in many cases are lacking in a unified vision. Beginning even with the expression “homeless,” it was proposed in a Diet member’s bill and for the first time officially recognized as the term to be applied by the supervising bureau of the former Ministry of Health and Welfare in 2000. The other supervising bureau, that traces its lineage back to the former Ministry of Labor, deals with two different categories it defines as “workers insecure from having lost their homes” and “people who have lost their homes from being laid off,” and conducts separate surveys for those categories.

If we examine the laws together, there exist in parallel both the “Special Measures Law Concerning Assistance, etc. for the Self-Support of the Homeless” (the so-called Homeless Self-support Assistance Law) from 2002, and the “Law Concerning the Promotion of Provision of Rental Housing for People Needing Consideration in Securing Housing” (the so-called Housing Safety Net Law) from 2007, jurisdictional authority for which lies respectively with the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare (MHLW) for the former and the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, and Transport (MLIT) for the latter. Here

we can see the typical vertical separation of the bureaucracy in action. The “Aid Centers for Integrating into Community Life” project in which the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare have joined hands is one of the very few collaborative projects between government agencies.

First of all, while the Homeless Self-support Assistance Law and the Housing Safety Net Law were a double sword arising from the problems of housing poverty, because their origins were different and perhaps because of the character of ideally rationale law, it is at present difficult to effectively back up people involved in projects of providing and managing housing. In the 1990s, Japanese public housing decided delegate initiatives for the provision of that housing to the private market. In order to supplement that, in the Housing Safety Net Law of 2007 it clearly affirms that the central government must pay heed to the appropriate apportionment of low rent housing that it is possible for low income earners to live in. And it aims at improving the functioning of the housing safety net through the effective utilization of public rental housing stock and the fostering of public housing by leasing existing private rental housing.

Certainly it represents a landmark change that for the first time the rationale for the housing policy was specified as “securing a housing safety net” in a broad sense for those named as “people needing consideration in securing of housing” which is not limited to low income earners but includes the elderly and households with children as well. However, because it was not a law that was created from the bottom up based on the realities of giving assistance on the front line arena, it tended to announce only goals to strive for. And concerning the question, “Who is the target?,” because there was no specific stipulation beyond what is written above, in actual implementation it necessitated a great deal of discretionary judgment on the front line arena.

The Homeless Self-support Assistance Law is set to expire soon in July of 2012. Unlike the Housing Safety Net Law, in some fashion or other on the front line arena in giving assistance for escaping from homelessness, a bottom-up style of assistance was advanced and the early traces of a pursuit of Japanese-style “social housing” were visible. The urgent and pressing work for the moment is to organize the experiences and know-how of giving aid in escaping from homelessness and to ensure that the possibilities of realizing Japanese-style “social housing” are written into the successor to the Homeless Self-support Assistance Law, is it not?

## **V. The Realities of Aid for Escaping from Homelessness**

The research team which the author leads has focused since its early stages on the aftercare for people leaving the Homeless Self-support Centers, the conditions in Free or Low Rent Lodging Houses that are used in aid for escaping homelessness and interim facilities that are representative of ‘livelihood protection’ facilities, and the actualities of living in rental apartments in the community. We have continued to do surveys of how these housing resources physically support aid for escaping homelessness and what the effects are of aid carried out by aid organizations. In this section I wish to describe the status of aid for the ex-homeless people in the local communities and how the implementation of “social housing” type housing welfare is actually proceeding based on

the survey results of recent years. In particular, I will attempt to estimate what has not been calculated before, the total annual numbers of cases of aid for the homeless by the public sector and aid organizations, the number of those that are living in apartments in the community, and the number of those living in apartments who received aid from aid organizations, in other words the scale of the provision of “social housing.”

Last year of 2010, as part of the Social Welfare Promotion Projects of the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare, the National Homeless Aid Network was entrusted with carrying out 3 large scale surveys titled the “Survey of the Visibility of Homelessness in the Broader Sense and the Actual Status of Aid Policies,” abbreviated below as the “Broader Homeless Survey” (<http://www.homeless-survey.jp/>). The author served as one of the survey representatives. It is these surveys which make the estimates described above possible.

The first survey, “Survey of Those Moving, etc.”) was a survey of the total numbers or of samples of people who moved in some form or other away from being homeless with the assistance of aid organizations between April 2008 and March 2010. The total number of assistance cases for aid organizations (there were exactly 100 organizations responded) during that period was reported as 7,400, and the number of those that responded to the survey were 52.1% or 3,858 cases. The total of number of aid cases through aid organizations nationwide (about 180 groups) for the 2 year period according to our estimate was 13,000, or 6,500 per year.

The second survey, “Survey of Entrants,” was a survey of the total number or a sample of the entrants to transitional facilities (free or low rent lodging house or housing with aid attached) that were operated under the name of homeless aid organizations as of October, 2010. The total number of entrants reported by the aid organizations was 8,750, and of those we were able to get survey responses from 17.4% or 1,519 individuals. Taking into account as well the 2009 survey results from the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare (Mizuuchi 2009), we estimate that there is a capacity nationwide for 30,000 entrants.

The third survey, “Survey of Welfare Offices,” was a survey of the total number of cases where decisions had been made to commence giving ‘livelihood protection’ payments to people in situations of homelessness at welfare offices nationwide in February, 2011. From among 1,303 welfare offices nationwide, we received responses from 1,889 cases at 878 offices. Extrapolating to annual numbers, we estimate that in one year there were 36,000 cases of homeless people using ‘livelihood protection’ payments to escape from homelessness. The number had increased by 20% from a little over 30,000 in 2006.

In contrast, the total number of people being discharged from Homeless Self-support Centers in 2009 was 8,440, of whom 20% or 1,693 found jobs and left, and 29.3% or 2,469 left because their terms of stay expired, they violated the rules, or they left without permission. Adding these slightly more than 4,000 cases to the 36,000 cases above of people using ‘livelihood protection’ payments to escape from homelessness, we can estimate that in one year there were roughly 40,000 cases of people for once succeeding in escaping from homelessness. Since we estimate the number of cases of people escaping homelessness through aid from aid organizations to be 6,500 in one year, that means that of the 40,000 cases nationwide escaping homelessness, 16% of those received assistance from homeless aid organizations. Also, there were a bit over 8,000 cases of people escaping homelessness via the Homeless Self-support Aid Centers (this includes

clients such as those getting ‘livelihood protection’ payments after discharged). This amounts to a 20% share of that figure of 40,000.

In order to know the total number of those who made the transition to apartments in the community, based on the total number of aid cases in one year that was estimated above at 6,500, let us try to estimate the number of those who commenced living in apartments in the community from the results of the first survey, the “Survey of Those Moving, etc.” As can be seen in Table 2, if we use the rate of moving to ordinary housing as the effective percentage, that becomes 64%. If we apply this figure to the 6,500 described above, we can estimate that a little over 4,000 people received help from aid organizations and started living in apartments in the community. Of those people, 26.6% are cases of people who continued receiving aid after living in apartments, or a little less than 1,700 cases. We can estimate that this figure is the number by which “social housing” increases every year through aid for the homeless.

Table 2. Cross Table of Moving Destinations and Whether Whereabouts are Known for Aftercare

(Source: “Broad Meaning Homeless Survey”)

	In contact	Whereabouts Known	Whereabouts Unknown	Dead	Total
Ordinary housing	867 26.6%	651 20.0%	542 16.6%	22 0.7%	2,082 64.0%
Homeless Facilities	35 1.1%	55 1.7%	103 3.2%	1 0.0%	194 6.0%
Welfare Facilities	29 0.9%	53 1.6%	51 1.6%	3 0.1%	136 4.2%
Medical Facilities	23 0.7%	37 1.1%	70 2.2%	28 0.9%	158 4.9%
Prisons	2 0.1%	17 0.5%	23 0.7%	0 0.0%	42 1.3%
Other Aid Groups	9 0.3%	25 0.8%	62 1.9%	2 0.1%	98 3.0%
Absconded	9 0.3%	31 1.0%	366 11.3%	7 0.2%	413 12.7%
Death and Misc.	24 0.7%	14 0.4%	36 1.1%	58 1.8%	132 4.1%
Totals	998 30.7%	883 27.1%	1,253 38.5%	121 3.7%	3,255 100.0%

Well then, concerning what kind of aid was administered, a menu was provided to facilitate the connection between the aid recipients and the aid givers and their personal relationships that included: ‘free visiting,’ ‘livelihood counseling,’ ‘someone to talk to,’ and ‘personal counseling.’ Following that, in many cases a menu was provided that included ‘regular communications,’ ‘regular visits,’ ‘holding social and meal gatherings,’ and ‘a place or means for socializing among the aid recipients.’

Concerning what kind of housing people were living in, we will rely on another nationwide survey. This survey was made up of direct interviews with people receiving aftercare from aid organizations, which were obtained from 660 respondents nationwide (this survey was also carried out with the author serving as a representative: Rainbow League, “An Alternative National Homeless Survey,” (<http://www.osaka-sfk.com/homeless/leaflet2007.pdf>)). Structurally, most of the dwellings were wooden or non-wooden communal housing, with the latter being predominant in the big cities but in other areas being about equal in proportion. Looking just at the size of the rooms lived in, those 10 to 12.5m<sup>2</sup> or 6-7.5 *tatami* mats were the most numerous. On the other hand, a little less than 20% were smaller than 7.5m<sup>2</sup> (4.5 mats), and this proportion became higher especially in the larger cities. The minimum living space standard for elderly single people specified in the Long Term Housing Construction Planning is 15m<sup>2</sup> or more, so more than three quarters of people surveyed are living in housing that does not meet the minimum standard. As for the rent, the amounts are distributed widely from ¥20,000+ to ¥50,000+ per month, but in the larger cities they are mostly ¥40,000 to ¥45,000, although ¥45,000 to ¥50,000 can also be seen in the cities of the capital region. In other cities, they are evenly distributed from ¥20,000+ to ¥40,000+.

Regarding their geographical distribution, the homes of these people can be seen a lot in urban areas that have a lot of low rent housing. One can see cases where they occupy an entire house / apartment, or rent part of it, or where they are sporadically scattered in urban area. As for the regional cities, in those cities where there is not much of a history of aid for escaping homelessness, there seems to be no pattern to this geographical distribution. It generally depends on the nature of the aid organization. In cases, they are concentrated geographically in proximity to the activity base that is also being used for housing. In cases, it depends on the location of renting apartment buildings that are possible to enter. In some cases, whether there is a real estate agent involved in the network of the aid organization, or indeed when there are good relationships, one can see a clustering of the housings and an intentional buying up of apartments, and the quality of the services provided increases.

Additionally, in aid organizations that have accumulated a lot of aid work in the inner cities of the metropolitan areas, at the stock level they may have more than a thousand cases, and they are starting to be able implement a system for watching over people living in apartments. For example, one group in Tokyo has been able to locate their support facilities well geographically and that is making it possible to implement a total complement of assistance. In an example from Kitakyushu City, a Livelihood Support Center has been teamed up with a club of former clients who are able to continue keeping an eye out for the current clients. This has become a real area of concentration for “social housing.”

## **VI. The Role of Transitional Midterm Facilities in Aid for Escaping from Homelessness**

In this way, the people living in apartments in the community, having escaped from homelessness, their housing, and the realities of aid have been clarified. What needs to be additionally touched upon are the existence, the actual state, and the effects of the interim facilities that people pass through temporarily before they move into apartments,

especially the workings of the Free or Low Rent Lodging Houses that correspond to Category 2 Social Welfare Facilities under the Social Welfare Law, which must be registered, and the housing facilities that are not registered but operate similarly.

Among these interim facilities, many take the form of places where people who have received ‘livelihood protection’ payments can live temporarily until they move into apartments in the community. In the first survey described above, people who had at least once used these interim facilities before they moved into apartments reached as high as 59.7%. In the third survey, the Survey of Social Welfare Offices, the survey of places where ‘livelihood protection’ payments began yielded some valuable information. As can be seen in Table 3, in 34.2% of cases they were able to move directly into local apartments, etc. (domiciles), and the next highest percentage, at 21.2%, lived at first in ‘lodging houses, etc.’ which are interim facilities, followed by ‘medical facilities’ at 12.6%. The totals for usage of interim facilities, including ‘Category 1 Social Welfare Facilities,’ ‘facilities, etc.’ and ‘lodging houses, etc.’ reached as high as 38.5%.

Table 3. Housing or Entrance Destination at the Time ‘livelihood protection’ Payment were Awarded

	Case numbers	%
On the street	43	2.3
Ordinary housing	642	34.2
Short term housing	169	9.0
Category 1 Social Welfare Facilities	175	9.3
Facilities, etc.	151	8.0
Lodging houses, etc.	399	21.2
Medical facilities	237	12.6
Prisons, etc.	8	0.4
Misc.	55	2.9
Total	1879	100.0

(Source: “Broad Meaning Homeless Survey”)

To begin with, since these interim facilities are temporary transition facilities, one might suppose that the time limit for living there is a shorter period. In the nationwide survey done by the Rainbow League mentioned above, the average period of stay was more than a year and a half at 20.1 months. In survey number 2, the “Survey of Entrants,” the entrants themselves were asked about their expectations of moving into local apartments, and this was compared to the judgment of the aid organizations on the prospects for moving in the future. 37.5% of the entrants themselves responded that they had no expectations of moving, and the aid organizations said for 32.4% that there was no prospect of moving. For both groups, the answer ‘no prospect’ exceeded 30%, and the number of cases where both the individuals themselves and the aid groups agreed that here was no prospect of moving was 27.7% or more than one quarter. The reality that Free or Low Rent Lodging Houses, and housing with aid attached, are becoming permanent terminal housing is becoming apparent.

In consideration of this reality, the numbers of cases where the interim midterm facilities themselves are becoming long term housing have increased quite a bit. Originally, Category 1 Social Welfare Facilities were supposed to be holding receptacles, but they cannot perform so. Instead actually, in the interim facilities such as lodging house described above, the trend towards individual rooms has to nearly quarters of the

capacity, with individual rooms with a staff member always on duty at 52.4% and individual rooms with a staff member visiting at 19.4%, and the individual rooms with staff members on duty pattern has become the standard for these facilities. The metamorphosis of these interim facilities where aid is given to people have no choice but to continue staying in the facility into “social housing” can be seen as proceeding in actuality. The expansion of Category 1 Social Welfare Facilities, especially Relief Center and Rehab Center, from the viewpoint of both escaping from the facilities and the fiscal burden, is not much of a prospect, and so there is a great necessity to foster the operation of the interim facilities, like those in namely ‘Category 1.5’ that might receive a certain amount of public investment, under appropriate guidelines in near future.

In terms of quantity, if one accepts the premise that the better interim facilities responded to the current survey, the parameter is 8,750, and if the cases where it has become terminal housing are 27.7%, then that means a figure of 2,400. One can recast this number as a case of “social housing” stock in which a great deal of housing assistance added from the arena of interim facilities.

## VII. A National Minimum for Housing in Japan

The cost of ‘livelihood protection’ payments in Japan, as shown in Table 4, in comparison to the major cities of East Asia, is as much as 3 times as high. Even taking into account the changes in exchange rates, the amount of welfare payments is more than twice as high. In Seoul, Hong Kong, or Taipei, it would be completely impossible to live in an apartment in the community on ‘livelihood protection’ payments alone, and people have no choice but to live in very tiny and poor quality apartments or utilize interim facilities. By contrast, in the case of Japan, it is actually possible to live in an apartment in the community on this amount, which is an advantage. The author is proposing that this advantage of Japan’s ‘livelihood protection’ payments in making it possible to live in communities be directed towards the nurturing of Japanese-style “social housing.”

Table 4. Comparison of ‘livelihood protection’ Payments in Asian Cities (based on the author’s research, October 2010)

	Welfare Payments	Exchange Rate Adjustment 9.12.2010	Welfare Payments Converted to Japanese Yen	GDP per capita	Multiplier to compare welfare payment/GDP to Tokyo
Tokyo 23 wards	¥140,500	¥1	¥140,500	34,254 US\$	1
Osaka City	¥127,440	¥1	¥127,440	34,254 US\$	0.91
Seoul	405,881 Won	¥0.072	¥29,223	19,983 US\$	0.36
Hong Kong	3,095 HK\$	¥10.83	¥33,519	29,845 US\$	0.27
Taipei	14,614 NT\$	¥2.65	¥38,727	29,600 US\$	0.32

Concerning the ‘Livelihood Protection’ Law and the Homeless Self-support Assistance Law which runs along a parallel track, one can say that the budget has begun to penetrate the entire country. Table 1 shows the changes for the years 2003, 2007, and 2010 in the budget under the Homeless Self-support Assistance Law in Japan. Since the shock of the Lehman Brothers collapse, a large amount of funds have been apportioned rapidly and widely across the country for projects within the budget framework of the Homeless Self-

support Assistance Law. But there are a number of cases where money was invested from funds that were appropriate for emergency measures, and the recognition that the budget which expanded so rapidly was working within the framework of self-support aid for the homeless was not in fact something that was apparent to the aid organizations.

The fiscal problems related to the rapidly growing cost of 'livelihood protection' payments has become a huge political issue that is linked to an urgent reexamination of Japan's social security system. Moreover, one can expect that there will be a lengthy debate before any draft proposals can be reached. According to Otake (2005), regarding measures for the housing-vulnerable people through using public housing, if the housing-vulnerable are concentrated in public housing estate, communities will not properly form, and the burden of externalities will be great, and he argues that even if the original necessity for which public housing was built no longer exists, it is difficult to change its usage, etc., and there are many demerits but no merits to this idea. He advocates that rather than providing public housing directly to housing-vulnerable people who are low income earners, we should change over to a policy in which rent subsidies are given only to people who are receiving 'livelihood protection' payments (Otake Fumio, 2005, "Policies for the Housing-Vulnerable," in *Toshi Jutakugaku*, No.50, Summer 2005, pp. 54-56). However, in this debate consideration has not been paid to the question of whether it would be possible for such people to support their livelihoods only through policies of rent subsidies without any housing welfare assistance.

This is where the power of assistance for escaping from homelessness that has been constructed from the bottom up can come into play. For the successor law to the Homeless Self-support Assistance Law, what is needed is to improve the legal infrastructure that will give legal and fiscal backup to the provision of assistance by aid organizations, in response to the trend towards "social housing" based on 'livelihood protection' payments, and something that will be a legal base for fiscal support of high quality interim facilities using the framework of "self-support assistance projects."

The author is advocating the development of Japanese-style "social housing" as a national minimum for housing. This means encouraging "social housing" with aid attached as an alternative to the existing public housing, and it is "Japanese-style" in that it differs from the "social housing" that is the mechanism for providing housing in Europe and North America. It is not the provision of more housing but the utilization of the existing stock of housing resources, and it means that it is important to create appropriate mechanisms for assistance in moving in and living in such places. Regarding the creation of an appropriate living environment, because the Construction Standards Law is very strict, it will be very difficult to renovate low rent housing without the government exercising flexibility in construction guidelines. And the rent amounts will fall lower because they depend on the rental allowances in 'livelihood protection' payments. However, for the housing providers, the sense of security from the attachment of aid in collaboration with aid organizations will provide some guarantees for getting involved with renovations and improvements to the living environment. The implementation of this "community housing" through the joint efforts of local aid organizations, real estate business people, and landlords will, I believe, lead towards the realization of a national minimum in housing.

This experiment has led to the emergence of about 1,700 units of "social housing" with aid attached through aid to the homeless per year, in contrast to the public housing

stock of 2.18 million units. It is estimated that passing 10 years of aid for escaping homelessness, the stock might have already exceeded 10,000 units. I estimate that there are also as stock 2,400 units in high quality interim facilities that are being used as permanent terminal housing. If one adds on the cases of single room occupancy houses such as in *yoseba* day laborer districts that have been converted to 'welfare housing' with aid attached, the number is well above 15,000, which is a little less than 1% of public housing.

The keys to this working are mechanisms for giving subsidies for the housing that is secured by aid organizations, the establishment of third-party bodies that will strictly oversee that (bodies giving architectural guidance and checking on rents and services), close collaboration with case workers, and connections with the local community welfare network. As an experiment in creating a national minimum in housing, these should be fostered in the successor bill to the Homeless Self-support Assistance Law. (The wording in this part comes from the ideas of my colleague Ms. Satoh Yumi in Urban Research Plaza).