

Preface

Overview of nutrition education program for national health promotion in Asian countries: current situation and future direction

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The publication of the proceedings of the 4th Asian Network Symposium on Nutrition “The Nutrition Education Program for National Health Promotion in Asian Countries: a Focus on School-based Programs”, held at the National Institute of Health and Nutrition (NIHN), Japan on September 8, 2010 is a significant step for regional and international nutrition. The symposium was joint with the “IUNS Workshop on Capacity and Leadership Development in Nutrition Sciences” from September 7-9, 2010, organized by the International Union of Nutritional Sciences (IUNS) in Japan, and was supported by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, Japan, the Japan Dietetics Association, the Japanese Society of Nutrition and Dietetics, and the Japanese Society of Nutrition and Food Sciences. It was also collaborative with the 57th Annual Assembly of the Japanese Society of Nutrition and Dietetics held from September 10-12.

The symposium was co-chaired by Prof Shigeru Yamamoto and Dr Nobuo Nishi and includes a plenary presentation, country reports and discussion. The plenary presentation “School Lunch for Health Promotion among Children” was made by Ms Nobuko Tanaka, Ministry of Education, Sports, Science, and Technology, Japan. Country reports were given by Dr Jihyun Yoon from Korea, Dr Yueching Wong from Taiwan, Dr Duc Son NT Le from Vietnam, and Ms Letty Shiu from Singapore. The general discussion was led by Dr LT Cavalli-Sforza from WHO/WPRO, Dr Takanori Noguchi from the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, Japan, Ms Mitsuko Otome from the Japan Dietetics Association, Dr Alka M Chutani from All India Institute of Medical Sciences (who also made a brief country report), Ms Tebogo TO Leepile from Ochanomizu University Graduate School, and ourselves.

In Japan, the school lunch system has functioned well under the School Lunch Law enacted in 1954, and the nutritional and growth status of Japanese children has greatly improved. In addition, for nutrition education in Japan, a Basic Law on Shokuiku and the Diet and Nutrition Teacher System were introduced in 2005 and 2007 respectively, and have probably been important contributors to the present nutritional status of people in Japan. The importance of school-based nutrition program towards improving nutrition status and establishing healthy behavior and lifestyle among children is increasingly acknowledged in Japan and worldwide. The symposium has enabled past experience, the current situation and future prospects for nutrition education policies and programs, especially for children, to be shared and directed towards a changing environment for the prevention of nutritionally-related disease, health promotion and the enhancement of the quality of life in Asia and beyond.