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WOMEN WORKERS IN JAPAN

1967

WOMEN'S & MINORS' BUREAU
MINISTRY OF LABOR
JAPAN



A woman worker in a watch making plant

Machine operators in a bank





A woman worker in a watch making plant

Women assemblers in an electronics machine plant



Foreword

This pamphlet on women workers in Japan is published periodically by the Women's and Minors' Bureau, Ministry of Labor. It tries to close up the circumstances of employment and working conditions of women through the factual information.

Data are of 1965 collected mainly from government statistics. It is hoped that this pamphlet would serve as a reference on women workers in Japan.

January 1967

Women's & Minors' Bureau,
Ministry of Labor

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1 Outline

The rapid expansion of economy and progress of industrialisation in the post-war Japan has had a great impact on the employment of women workers. The number of women employees has radically increased, the range of their occupations been extended and wages improved. And with the increase of women with higher educational attainment, opportunities for professional and technical occupations have also been extended for them. The recent shortage of labor power, especially that of young generation, has caused more and more demand for women workers, and eventually quite many married women are entering into labor market.

The Labor Standards Law enacted in 1947 regulates the working hours of women workers, prohibits midnight work, and assures equal wage for equal work for both sexes and maternity protection, etc. and thereby protects working women. The Women's and Minors' Bureau was established in the Ministry of Labor in the same year and has since endeavored to improve the protection, welfare and status of working women.

2 Employed Women

In 1965 women population of 15 years and over was 37,580,000, of which 50.6% was in labor force, whereas that of men constituted 81.7% of 35,390,000 population. Recent tendency is comparative decrease of labor force for men and women in population, that is, those not in labor force have been increased every year. One reason for this tendency is that more and more people are proceeding to the higher level of education. The number of women students was also increased and the increase was over 40 percent between 1955 and 1965. (Table 1)

Women workers, that is, those economically active, in Japan are divided roughly into three categories; self-employed, family workers, and paid employees. The biggest portion was occupied by the paid employees, and its number in 1965 was 8,730,000, that of the family-workers 7,440,000, and the self-employed 2,650,000. It was not many years ago that the family-workers outnumbered the paid employees and occupied the highest percentage of all women workers.

But due to the progressive industrialisation more women went to gainful employment and distribution of these two categories were reversed in 1963 and the number of family workers went downward steadily since then. Now most of family workers, 70%, belong to agriculture and forestry and are an important labor power, occupying 45% of all agricultural employees, to keep up Japanese agriculture. (Diagram 1)

Table I Population by Employment Status

(1965)

(1,000 persons)

	Women	Men
Population, over 15 years	37,580	35,290
Labor Force	19,030	28,840
Employed { Total	18,830	28,650
{ Agriculture	6,220	5,320
{ Non-agriculture	12,590	23,300
Self-employed { Total	2,650	7,040
{ Agriculture	940	3,470
{ Non-agriculture	1,710	3,570
Unpaid family workers { Total	7,440	2,480
{ Agriculture	5,150	1,580
{ Non-agriculture	2,290	910
Paid employees { Total	8,730	19,110
{ Agriculture	130	280
{ Non-agriculture	8,600	18,820
Unemployed persons	210	180
Not in labor force	18,530	6,440

Source: Bureau of Statistics, Prime Minister's Office

Diagram 1 Trend of Employed Women

Unit : 1,000 persons



Source : Bureau of Statistics, Prime Minister's Office

3 Women Paid Employees

The number of the women paid employees was 8,730,000 in 1965, almost doubled in 10 years and occupied 31.4% of the total number of paid employees. During most of these 10 years the yearly increase of women exceeded 400 thousands except for a few lag years.

(Table II, Diagram 2)

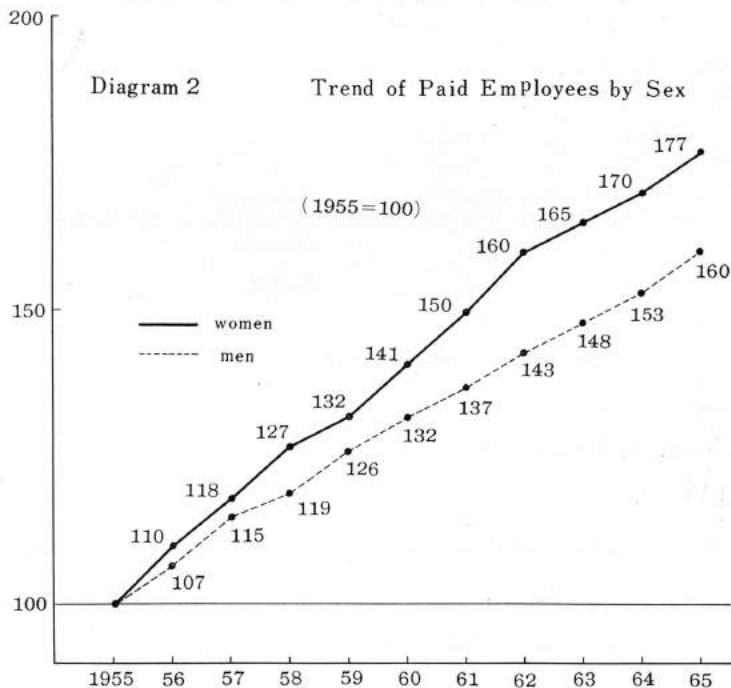
Table II Trend of Paid Employees

(1955 to 1965)

(1,000 persons)

Year	Total	Women	Men	Women employees as a percentage of all employees
1955	16,900	4,920	11,980	29.1%
56	18,230	5,390	12,840	29.6
57	19,570	5,800	13,770	29.6
58	20,500	6,260	14,240	30.5
59	21,580	6,500	15,080	30.1
60	22,730	6,950	15,780	30.6
61	23,790	7,380	16,410	31.0
62	24,960	7,850	17,110	31.5
63	25,780	8,110	17,680	31.5
64	26,690	8,350	18,340	31.3
65	27,830	8,730	19,110	31.4

Source: "Labor Force Survey", Bureau of Statistics, Prime Minister's Office



Source: Bureau of Statistics, Prime Minister's

Office

The average rate of labor force participation of women in 1965 was 23.2%. That is to say, one out of every 4.3 women of 15 years and over was working as a paid employee.

The highest participation rate of paid employees by age groups was 54.2% of 20-24 years, followed by 29.5% of 15-19 years, 23.8% of 25-29 years. That is, women in gainful employment is high in the young age brackets under 30 years. In the age groups over 40 years participation rate was less than 15%. In comparison with the relevant data of U. S. A. there is a significant difference in the older age groups who enter into gainful employment. (Table III)

Table III Labor Force Participation Rates of Women by Age.

	(1965)		(1,000 persons)	
	Population 15 years of age and over	Paid employees	Paid employees as percent of population	Women workers as % of women population (U.S.A.)
Total	37,580	8,730	23.2%	37.5%
15~19 years	5,330	1,570	29.5	26.2 ²⁾
20~24	4,630	2,510	54.2	49.3
25~29	4,160	990	23.8	38.3 ³⁾
30~39	7,800	1,580	20.3	46.0 ⁴⁾
40~54	8,400	1,670	19.9	50.7 ⁵⁾
55~64	3,800	340	8.9	41.3
65 years and over	3,470	70	2.0	10.2

Note : 1) Average for first 6 months, 1965

2) 14~19 years

3) 25~34 years

4) 35~44 years

5) 45~54 years

Source : Bureau of Statistics, Prime Minister's Office. Women's Bureau, U. S. Dept. of Labor

Age, Marital Status

As a tendency more and more matured women are entering into labor market and it makes the average age of women employees higher. The average age of women workers in 1965 was 28.1 years and that of men 33.2 years. While men did not indicate any change women's age extended 3 years in 10 years.

The highest among the percent distribution of women by age groups was of 20-24 years (28.8%) followed by 40-54 years (19.1%), 30-39 years (18.1%), and 15-19 years (18.0%), and those under 30 years occupied 58% of all women workers. (Table IV)

Table IV Paid Employees by Age-Groups,

(1962-65)

(1,000 persons)

		Total	15~ 19 years	20~ 24 years	25~ 29 years	30~ 39 years	40~ 54 years	55~ 64 years	65 years and over
Women	1962	7,850	1,660	2,280	960	1,360	1,290	240	290
	1963	8,110	1,600	2,380	970	1,450	1,390	260	320
	1964	8,350	1,510	2,510	950	1,510	1,510	290	330
	1965	8,730	1,570	2,510	990	1,580	1,670	340	380
Men	1962	17,110	1,590	2,960	2,900	4,630	3,640	1,120	280
	1963	17,670	1,540	3,090	2,930	4,870	3,760	1,170	310
	1964	18,340	1,450	3,290	3,000	5,100	3,940	1,240	330
	1965	19,110	1,520	3,330	3,100	5,310	4,170	1,310	370

Source : Bureau of Statistics, Prime Minister's Office

Out of 8,600,000 women workers in non-agriculture in 1965 3,000,000 were married women with husbands and 940,000 divorced and widows. That is, 45%, nearly half of women, were married. It is a significant increase from 35% in 1955 when single women were predominant of women workers. (Table V)

Table V Women Employees by Marital Status

	1965 ¹⁾		1955 ²⁾	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Total	8,600,000	100.0	5,075,100	100.0
Single	4,660,000	52.2	3,281,500	64.7
Married	3,000,000	34.9	1,062,600	20.9
Others	940,000	10.9	731,000	14.4

Note : 1) Non-agriculture only "Survey on Labor Force" Source : Bureau of Statistics, Prime Minister's Office

2) National Census

The ratio of married women in gainful employment to the total number of married women over 15 years was 13.7% for those with husbands and 16.8% for the divorced and widows. It is still far less than 29.4% of Great Britain and 34% of U. S. A. (with husbands only).

(Table VI)

Table VI Marital Status of Women Paid Employees in Population

(1,000 persons)

	Population of 15 years and over (a)	Non-agriculture paid employees (b)	b/a
Total	37,580	8,600	22.9%
Single	10,070	4,660	46.3
Married	21,910	3,000	13.7
Others	5,590	940	16.8

Source : Bureau of Statistics, Prime Minister's Office

Distribution of women by industries

Majority of women in gainful employment belong to non-agricultural industries and the paid employees in agriculture occupy only 1.5%.

The biggest proportion of women worked in manufacturing (3,120,000), followed by wholesale, retail, finance, and insurance (2,360,000), and service trades (2,090,000), and women who worked in these three categories of industries occupied 87% of total women workers. Women in the service trades were the second biggest of all before 1961, but it was replaced by wholesale, retail, finance, and insurance industry since then. (Table VII, Diagram 3)

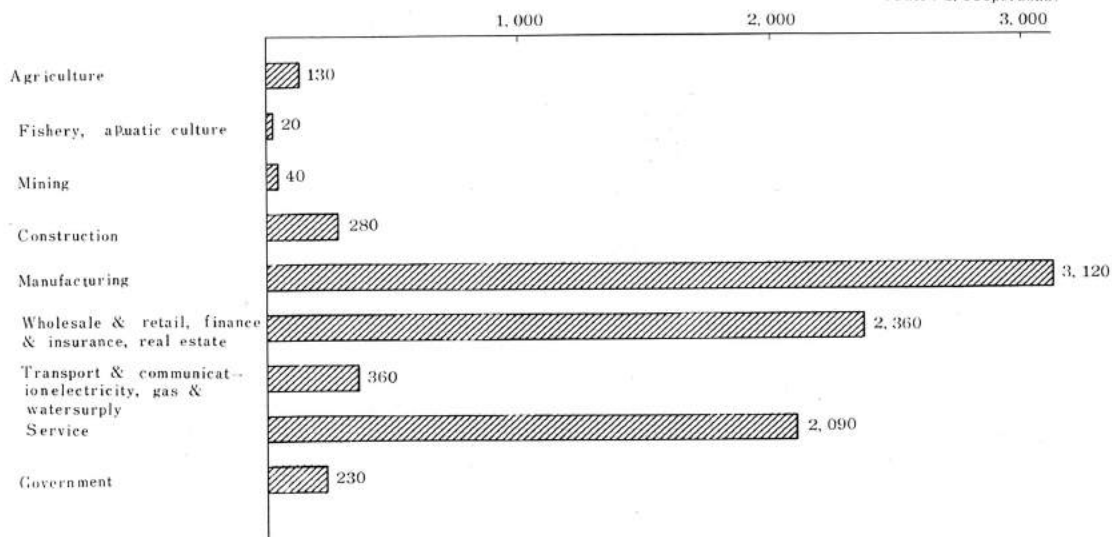
Table VII Number of Employees by Industry and Percentage Distribution

(1,000 persons)

Industry	sex		Absolute figures				percentage distribution			
			Women		Men		Women		Men	
	year		1965	1955	1965	1955	1965	1955	1965	1955
Total			8,730	4,920	19,110	11,980	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Agricultural			130	170	280	270	1.5	3.5	1.5	2.3
Non-agricultural			8,600	4,750	18,820	11,710	98.5	96.5	98.5	97.7
Fishery, aquatic culture			20	20	200	190	0.2	0.4	1.0	1.6
Mining			40	40	310	420	0.5	0.8	1.6	3.5
Construction			380	170	2,070	1,190	4.4	3.5	10.8	9.9
Manufacturing			3,120	1,800	6,750	3,750	35.7	36.6	35.3	31.3
Wholesale, retail, finance, insurance			2,360	1,120	3,300	1,990	27.0	22.8	17.3	16.6
Transport, communication, electricity, gas, water supply			360	210	2,580	1,620	4.1	4.3	13.5	13.5
Service trades			2,090	1,220	2,410	1,530	23.9	24.8	12.6	12.8
Government			230	170	1,220	1,020	2.6	3.5	6.4	8.5

Source: "Labor Force Survey", Bureau of Statistics, Prime Minister's Office

Diagram 3 Number of Women Paid Employees by Industries
(Unit : 1,000 persons)



Source : Bureau of Statistics, Prime Minister's Office

Women workers by occupations

In 1965 the highest percentage of women workers in occupational distribution was of clerical workers (28.4%) followed by craftsmen and production process workers (26.0%) and service trades (14.3%), and nearly 70% of women were concentrating on these three occupations. Significant increase was observed in clerical workers which were far less than craftsmen and production process workers in 1955. This remarkable change is perhaps due to the expansion of office works according to the progress of industries under the technological development and the automatisisation of office. Also radical change was observed for mining & quarrying and agricultural, forestry and fishery workers. The former decreased into less than half and the latter decreased 15% in 10 years. Ten percent of women workers were in sales and 9% in professional & technical occupations (mainly teachers and nurses). (Table VIII)

Table VIII Paid Employees by Occupations, 1965
(1965)

(1,000 persons)

Occupations	Women	Men	Women	Men
Total	8,730	19,110	100.0%	100.0%
Professional & technical wokers	760	1,260	8.7	6.6
Managers & officials	40	1,110	0.5	5.8
Clerical & related workers	2,510	3,780	28.8	19.8
Sales workers	880	1 510	10.1	7.9
Farmers, lumbermen & fishermen	140	440	1.6	2.3
Workers in mining & quarrying occupations	10	190	0.1	1.0
Workers in transport & communication occupations	220	1,620	2.5	8.5
Craftsmen & production process workers	2,220	6,620	25.2	34.6
Laborers	700	1,520	8.0	8.0
Service workers	1,270	1,050	14.5	5.5

Source : Bureau of Statistics, Prime Minister's Office

4 Wages and Working Hours

The average wage of women workers working in enterprises employing 30 regular workers and over in 1965 was 22,275 yen and that of men 46,571 yen per month. The highest wage was earned by women in electricity, gas&water supply, that is public utility enterprises, the second finance & insurance industries, and these wages exceeded the average wage over 10,000 yen. On an average, women's wages are less than half of men's wages, but this does not mean that women get half of men in equal job. Actually, in 1947 the principle of equal wage for equal work for men and women was established by the Labor Standards Law. This comparatively low wage is derived from the particular employment and wage system prevalent in the present Japanese economy. The wage is generally based on seniority of workers under the life employment system of each firm. That is to say, there is hierarchy of wages according to the age, duration of service, besides the skills of workers of that particular firm. And women workers are generally young, that is, many are in the starting stage of the wage hierarchy, and short in duration of service as well as a great number of women are engaged in unskilled works. These factors cause lower wage of women than that of men on an average. For instance, the starting wages of new graduates of various school level indicate little or at least not much difference by sex. (Table IX, X)

Table IX Wages by Industries (Major Group), 1965
(Establishments employing 30 regular workers and more)

Industry	Total cash earning		Ratio of women's wages to men's wages
	Women	Men	
Total	22,275 yen	46,571	47.8
Mining	18,173	43,883	41.4
Construction	19,372	42,751	45.3
Manufacturing	19,796	44,332	44.7
Wholesale & retail	22,939	45,918	50.0
Finance & insurance	32,398	68,141	47.5
Transport & communication	30,310	50,185	60.4
Electricity, gas & water supply	36,251	62,171	58.3

Source : "Monthly Labor Survey", Ministry of Labor

Table X Initiating Wage by Educational Attainment,
(1965)

Educational attainment	Women	Men	Percent of women as against men
	yen	yen	%
Lower Secondary school graduates	13,330	13,190	101.1
Upper secondary school graduates	15,670	16,430	95.4
Junior college graduates	17,810	18,360	97.0
University graduates	21,740	22,980	94.6

Source : "Survey on Wage Structure", Ministry of Labor

Working hours

Working hours of women in 1965 were 181.4 hours and 197.8 hours for men per month. As a tendency working hours have been decreasing for both men and women, and the decreasing rate for women is bigger than for men.

5 Women in Trade Union

On the whole, the trade union in Japan is unit union in each enterprise, and generally affiliates with united local organisations or national organisations by industries. Membership of unit trade unions in Japan in 1965 was 10,070,000 of which women membership was 2,770,000. Estimated rate of membership in the paid employees was 30.9% for women and 38.2%

for men. Membership rate of women is low compared with men, but yearly trend indicates the rate is increasing. (Table XI)

Table XI Women Membership of Trade Unions and Estimated Rates of Membership
(As of June each year) (1,000 persons)

Year	Memberships	No. of gainful employees	Estimated rates of memberships in the employees
1961	2,170	7,270	29.9%
1962	2,370	7,900	30.0
1963	2,530	8,280	30.6
1964	2,650	8,580	30.9
1965	2,770	8,980	30.9

Source: "Survey on Trade Unions", Ministry of Labor. "Survey on Labor Force", Bureau of Statistics, Prime Minister's Office

Many trade unions have a women's department or youths & women's department to promote specifically women's interests in the union activities.

6 Legislation Concerning Women Workers

There are protective laws for women workers mainly in connection with maternity in the Labor Standards Law which became effective in 1947.

A. *The Labor Standards Law*, covering all industries except for industrial home work and domestic service at home regulates the minimum standards of working conditions. It establishes principle of equal remuneration for men and women and contains some special measures for the protection of women and minors. Women are chiefly protected for their maternity. Some of these measures affecting women workers are stated in the following.

(1) *Principle of Equal Pay for Men and Women*: This provision is similar in aim to that stipulated in the preamble of the Constitution of the International Labor Organization which states that equal wages should be paid to men and women for work of equal value. The article provides that "the employer shall not discriminate women against men concerning wages by reason of the worker being a woman."

(2) *Working Hours and Rest Days*: As a principle the employer must not employ the worker more than 8 hours a day excluding recess or 48 hours a week, and must provide at least one rest day per week to the worker.

(3) *Prohibition of Night Work*: The employer must not employ women between the hours of 10. p. m. and 5 a. m. in principle. But this stipulation is not applied to the jobs specified by Ordinance as superintendent of a women's dormitory, air-stewardess, and not applied either to the agriculture, forestry, fishery, telephone operator, etc.

(4) *Restrictions on Hazardous and Injurious Jobs*: The employer must not employ a woman in the dangerous or harmful jobs specified by Ordinances, nor in jobs which require the conveyance of heavy goods beyond 20 kg. (intermittent work, 30 k.g.).

(5) *Ban on Underground Labor*: The employer must not employ women in underground labor.

(6) *Maternity Leave*: The employer must not employ a woman for 6 weeks before childbirth when she requests rest days during the period. The employer must not employ a woman within 6 weeks after childbirth. However, when the woman requests to work after 5 weeks, it is permissible to assign her to a job that doctor pronounces unharmed to her.

When the pregnant woman requires, the employer shall change her to a lighter job. The employer must not dismiss a woman who is on maternity leave during the period and 30 days thereafter.

(7) *Nursing Period*: A woman nursing a baby less than one year old may request nursing time, twice a day, each at least 30 minutes during the working hours, besides the ordinary recess.

(8) *Menstruation Leave*: The employer must not employ a woman who suffers heavily from menstruation or a woman engaged in jobs injurious to menstruation if she requests a menstruation leave.

B. *The Employment Security Law*, promulgated in 1947, provides all people with opportunities to get jobs suitable to their abilities. For the enforcement of this law 463 Public Employment Security Offices have been established all over the country, and women who got placements through these offices were 1,166,000 out of 2,253,000 applicants in 1965.

C. *Vocational Training Law*, established in 1958, the purpose of this law is to foster skilled workers needed for the manufacturing and other industries by providing vocational training and conducting the trade test in order to enable workers to acquire and improve necessary skills, and thereby to assure the security of employment and the improvement of the worker's status as well as contribute to the development of the national economy.

There are 352 Vocational Training Centers at present, where workers acquire skills necessary for jobs of about 80 items such as radio and television engineering and repairing, accounting, typewriting, design of pottery, tensorial art, knitting, beauty art, woodworking, printing, painting, etc. according to their inclination.

In this respect, Women's and Minors' Bureau initiated two types of special vocational training centers primarily for widows and housewives who generally find greater difficulty in obtaining suitable jobs.

(1) *Public Vocational Training Centers for Industrial Home Work*: The aims of these centers are to provide people who are widows, housewives, physically handicapped, aged or those encountered with difficulty in doing gainful work outside their homes, with information, consultation, reference and other conveniences, and thus help to solve problems concerning industrial home work. Altogether there are 41 centers which were established in the years between 1956 and 1966. Women's and Minors' Bureau subsidized these centers with one-third of expenses and gives necessary guidance and supervision as to their management and services.

(2) *Public Vocational Training Centers for Domestic Work*: These centers are also meant for widows and others who have difficulty in finding jobs. The centers give such services as to provide them with training in domestic work; promote their placement and enlarge the field of employment fit for them. At present there are eight centers. The Bureau gave subsidy for initial expenses, management expenses, and allowances and gives them guidance as to their services. A term of training is three months and the training covers 12 subjects including general knowledge, cooking, care of infants, home administration, etc. There is great demand for the graduates of these centers who hold high public reputation and whose influence, it is expected, will contribute a good deal to improve the working conditions of domestic workers in general.

D. *The Labor Union Law*, promulgated in 1945, aims to promote the status of workers by establishing equal standing for both workers and employers in their bargaining, and to protect workers on their collective activities.

E. *Legislatures Concerning Social Security for Women Workers*: The welfare of women workers are also protected by other social insurance laws which cover all workers.

These laws assure workers of benefits for accident, sickness, unemployment, old age, etc.

Workmen's Accident Compensation Insurance Law, established in 1947, provides a worker with prompt and equitable protection against his injury, invalidity or death due to the causes of occupational accidents or diseases for which the employer has an obligation to compensate according to the stipulation of the Labor Standards Law. The law also regulates to establish the necessary institutions for the welfare of the worker in occupational accidents or diseases.

The Health Insurance Law, established in 1922, provides for the payment of benefits to insured persons and to persons supported by them in case of sickness, injury and death attributable to causes of sources outside of their employment. This law contains maternity

benefit provisions as follows :

(1) When an insured person has been confined in bed because of giving birth to a child, she is paid an amount for confinement equal to 50% of her standard monthly remuneration. When an insured person is incapable to work because of confinement, she is paid an amount equal to 60% of her standard daily remuneration for a period of 84 days, covering 42 days preceding and 42 days on and after the date of birth.

(2) When an insured person has given birth to a baby and she nurses the same baby, she is paid 2000 yen as a nursing allowance.

The Unemployment Insurance Law, established in 1947, grants an unemployment insurance benefit to the insured person when he or she is out of a job. An insured person who is out of a job and cannot be employed in spite of his or her will and ability to work, is paid 90 times in minimum, 270 times in maximum of 60% of his or her average daily wage in proportion to his or her length of service.

The Welfare Pension Insurance Law, established in 1941, provides for the payment of benefits in case of old age, invalidity, death or retirement of a worker and attributes to the stabilization of livelihood and the promotion of welfare, of a worker and his or her survivors.

Appendix

Ministry of Labor Establishment Law

(Law No. 162 of May 31, 1949)

Functions of Women's and Minors' Bureau

Article 9. The Women's and Minors' Bureau shall take charge of the following affairs :

- (1) Promotion of the working conditions peculiar to women and minor workers, and their protection ;
- (2) Prohibition of employment of children ;
- (3) Family labor problems and domestic servants ;
- (4) Other labor problems peculiar to women and minor workers, in addition to those listed in the preceding items ;
- (5) Worker's family problems, excepting, however, matters assigned to other ministries by law ;
- (6) Research, liaison and coordination on problems of the promotion of women's status and other women's problems, provided that such adjustment and coordination shall not preclude other ministries from carrying out such affairs as are placed thereunder by law.

