

## **Diverse approaches to achieving social innovation**

What is social innovation? Before participating in this program, I had never thought about it. However, participating in this field trip to Korea gave me an opportunity to learn what social innovation is, why it is important, and how to realize it. In this journal, I hope to write about the concept of social innovation and what I felt and thought about through my visit to Korea.

## **What is “Social Innovation”? Why Korea?**

“Social innovation in this study is defined as the successful implementation of activities, such as ideas, practices, or objects, through new collaborations and partnerships, in ways that positively impact society by improving the delivery of public services” (Byrne et al. 2014) Social innovation is described as activities that have a more positive impact on society through new collaborations. More specifically, it would be actions that contribute to solving social issues. “Social innovation in the public sector incorporates a new framework that allows for collaboration not only with other “(Byrne et al., 2014). Thus, a bottom-up approach is considered important, rather than the traditional top-down approach of big government.

So why is Korea attracting attention in this context? South Korea faces the same social problems as Japan. Some of them may be even more serious than in Japan.

Lee identified the following five social problems in Korea: “social inequality, environmental degradation, suicide and low birthrate, unemployment, weak social welfare and the destruction of social bonds.” (Lee, E. K., 2017) These social problems have become more serious as a side effect of the fast-paced economic development to date, and governments are struggling to deal with them. In this context, citizen-led Social Innovation is attracting attention.

## **Initiatives Introduction**

I would like to introduce some of the initiatives for social innovation, with a focus on the organizations we visited this time.

## **Support for social enterprises**



Korea social enterprise promotion agency (KoSEA) (한국사회적기업진흥원) was established in Dec 2010, aimed for business related to the advancement and promotion of social enterprises. In 1990s, Korea experienced Asian financial crisis and resulted in destabilization of society due to unfriendly job market, vulnerable social welfare. This led to motivation of social enterprise promotion for social welfare services expansion and job creation for the vulnerable. Through the lecture, I learned about various case studies that the agency has supported, and were also able to understand that its support has created jobs for the vulnerable and contributed to the stabilization of the society. On the other hand, I feel that there are issues regarding the method of such an approach: Is social enterprise really a better approach in creating social innovation? And the appropriateness of SoSEA's support methods. Regarding the former, it is true that social enterprises generate employment for the socially vulnerable, but it cannot be denied that they may be exploiting the socially vulnerable. In order to prevent such fraud, government agencies are required to supervise and guide the activities of such companies. In addition, that system must be made highly effective. With regard to the latter, SoSEA supports the operation of business incubation centers and provides consulting assistance for market entry and corporate growth. However, how much of an impact are these supports having on the social sector? In addition, it is necessary to monitor the efficiency of investment in social enterprises in supporting the socially vulnerable by comparing with other countries. Such repeated verification and improvement will lead to better social innovation.

### Multilateral Approach



The Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat (TCS) is an inter-governmental organization established with a vision to lasting peace, common prosperity and There are trilateral summits, 21 ministerial meetings, over 70 inter-governmental mechanisms and over 100. It covers politics, economy, sustainable development and society and culture. I was able to learn that people from China, Japan and Korea, despite their different languages and cultures, cooperate and work on projects every day. In such a top-down diplomatic approach, the challenge is to involve the general public. However, it is often difficult for one country to solve the problem alone, or other countries are facing the same challenges.

In such cases, I felt that it is important to collaborate and lead through the framework among the three countries.

### Visit to Korea University



Through the lecture, I learned about the political situation in Korea and the differences in political awareness among different generations and genders. Also, in recent years, there is an environment where extreme ideas can easily spread through social networking services. Such platforms can be important tools for generating social innovation and engaging the public. On the other hand, it is also easy to mislead the public with conspiracy theories and other untruthful information. Through the university tour, I also understood that universities can also be a platform for such social innovation. I learned about the existence of various platforms that encourage such proactive actions by young people and became aware of the diversity of approaches to Social Innovation.

Through this field trip, I was able to understand and think about the various approaches to realize social innovation in Korea. At the same time, I was able to understand that the concept of social innovation has a level of complexity and interdisciplinarity that is far beyond what I was able to comprehend in these four days. I would like to continue to think about how I myself can work on and contribute to social innovation in the future.

