

I am Shimazaki, a professor at National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies. I was originally an administrative officer of the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, and have been involved in medical system reform. After serving as Deputy Director of the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research in 2003, I have been involved in education and research on social security systems, including medical policy, at the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies since 2007. I have been involved in education and research on social security systems, including medical policy, at the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies since 2007.

Today we are talking about UHC. I sometimes compare UHC to a jet plane. For UHC to work, first we need a powerful engine, namely economic growth. Secondly, the vast wings, in other words the spirit of social solidarity. Thirdly, we need an excellent pilot or mechanic, that is, strong leadership, political leadership, government officer or researcher. Last but not least, I would like to say that we need a long runway, namely the basic infrastructure for administrative finance.

If I was asked which one is the most important among them, I think it is economic growth. Japan was devastatingly damaged by the defeat of World War II. As with the medical system, it was devastated by the lack of equipment, medicines and rapid inflation. However, the Japanese worked together to recover from the devastation, and was able to achieve high economic growth from around 1955 until when the first oil crisis occurred in 1973. As for the background of UHC, I mentioned that economic growth is the most important. Japan achieved the universal health care insurance system in 1961 and developed it until 1973 and I think this was supported by the high economic growth that I just mentioned.

And then, why is that such high growth achieved? I think one of the reasons is of course because the power of the citizen combined with social security. Also, the international politics or the international economy at that time was relatively stable. But fundamentally, Japan's population structure as a whole was still young. For example, if we take a look at 1961 when the universal health care insurance system was introduced, the rate of aging, the proportion of the population over the age of 65 was 5.8% of the total population. Then, the first oil crisis occurred in 1973. Even in 1973, the rate of aging was 7.5%, so it was just the beginning of an aging society.

On the contrary, what Japan is facing today is the opposite, that is, the population has declined since its peak in 2008 and the current aging rate is now 28%, nearly 30%. Under such circumstances, the question is how to make the social security system, especially universal health coverage, sustainable in the future. However, I am convinced that Japanese people will be able to overcome it and share the results to countries around the world.

Lastly, I have a message for all the countries in the world. In each country, regardless of developed or developing countries, as for UHC, in countries that have already achieved it, there is a question as to how to maintain and develop it like Japan. Moreover, in countries where it has not been achieved yet, I think that achieving it as quickly as possible is their biggest challenge. For example, looking at the efforts of developing

countries, population aging has already begun while the prospects for achieving UHC have not yet been established in a very unstable economy. There are places where they are faced with the challenge of having to take measures against infection at the same time as lifestyle-related diseases. Also, the gap between the rich and the poor is expanding rapidly as economic globalization progresses and I think they are struggling with countermeasures.

Under such circumstances, I think that the challenges surrounding UHC that each country has differ from country to country. Japan has experience of achieving UHC about 60 years ago, which is relatively early in the world. And as I have just said, there are people who say that it is a developed country in the world, but it is also a country that is challenging various issues as its lifespan is increasing. While we are sometimes regarded as a developed country, Japan is tackling various issues in the midst of a longevity society. I will do my best to contribute to share these experiences with everyone in the world.

The last thing I would like to say is that this is not limited to UHC, but it is young people who are the main players and the driving force behind social reform. Gather your power and look not only at your own country but also the world, and at the same time look at your country by referring to the achievements and experiences of other countries. In other words, I hope that you will tackle the challenges of UHC with both a global perspective and a very micro perspective.