

Household Support Services in Tokyo: Bringing Local Women into the Workforce?

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While Japanese middle-class households in the prewar era often employed household help of various kinds, the usage of such help decreased greatly in the post-war era, along with the rise of the “professional housewife” paradigm and the accompanying notion that all household labor should be borne by the homemaker herself as her ‘profession.’ This research investigates the availability and uptake of household support services in Tokyo, focusing mainly on the government scheme launched in 2016 to solicit migrant workers for household support in National Strategic Special Zones. Through interviews with a sponsoring firm, as well as extant scholarly literature, and an interview with a politician, this paper seeks to understand the reasons behind the introduction of these programs and their ‘success’ to date in replacing the household labor of Japanese women.

Short Biography:

Glenda Roberts obtained her PhD in Anthropology from Cornell University in 1986. After holding research and academic positions in Honolulu from 1988, she has lived and worked in Japan since 1996, first at the University of Tokyo Institute of Social Sciences, and then, from 1998 to the present, at the Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies of Waseda University, where she is Professor. Her major areas of research are on gender, work, family, and migration policy in contemporary Japan. Her most recent publications in the migration field are “An Immigration Policy by *any* Other Name: Semantics of Immigration to Japan” (*Social Science Japan Journal* 21(1)2018) and, with Noriko Fujita, “Low-skilled Migrant Labor Schemes in Japan’s Agriculture: Voices from the Field” (*Social Science Japan Journal*, 2023, XX, 1-19, Advance access publication 28 September 2023).