

# JAPAN'S ACCEPTANCE OF UKRAINIAN REFUGEES AND MIGRANT INTEGRATION

## — THE CHALLENGES AND POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS, AS SEEN IN THE INDICATORS AND PAST EXAMPLES —

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### SUMMARY

- The Japanese government began accepting Ukrainian refugees in March 2022, and their number is increasing. For Japan to continue accepting refugees, it will be important to have a functioning migrant integration policy, including access to employment, healthcare, and education<sup>1</sup>.
- Challenges facing Japan have been highlighted by the European MIPEX (the Migrant Integration Policy Index), an international index of migrant integration. Among them, some initiatives are beginning to be seen in areas such as language education, in which the involvement of businesses can be a key to finding potential solutions.
- Following the acceptance of Indonesian refugees, which led to Japan's accession to the Refugee Convention (1981), and the acceptance of Myanmar refugees, when Japan signed up fully to third-country resettlement (2010), the current situation may provide an opportunity to improve the ability of the Japanese economy and society to accommodate foreign residents. It is hoped that comprehensive action by all parties involved will lead to the creation of a society that embraces diversity.

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### 1. TREATMENT OF UKRAINIAN REFUGEES IN JAPAN

In March 2022, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida announced that Japan would accept Ukrainian refugees from a humanitarian standpoint, and as of January 18, 2023, the number of Ukrainian refugees accepted stood at 2,256. For comparison purposes, it will be useful to consider two similar cases that occurred in the past: 1) acceptance of 11,319 refugees from three Indochinese countries (Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia) under a refugee resettlement policy based on a 1979 cabinet decision (ended 2005), and 2) acceptance of 229 refugees (as of October 2022) from Myanmar via Thailand and Malaysia under a third-country resettlement program<sup>2</sup>, which began in 2010 based on a cabinet decision of 2008.

However, Ukrainian refugees do not fall under either of the two categories to which the Japanese government provides asylum, those categories being “resettled refugees” (1) and 2) above fall under this) and “convention

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<sup>1</sup> “Migrant integration policy frameworks should take into consideration the rights and obligations of migrants and host societies, including access to the labour market, health and social services, and education for children and adults.”

Source: International Organization for Migration's (IOM) Labour Migration and Human Development Programme ([https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl486/files/migrated\\_files/What-We-Do/docs/IOM-DMM-Factsheet-LHD-Migrant-Integration.pdf](https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl486/files/migrated_files/What-We-Do/docs/IOM-DMM-Factsheet-LHD-Migrant-Integration.pdf)) accessed January 12, 2023

<sup>2</sup> “Refugees who have received temporary asylum in refugee camps and similar places are moved from the country where they originally sought asylum to a third country that has agreed to accept them where they are granted the long-term right to remain. This is one permanent solution to the refugee problem, along with voluntary repatriation and resettlement in the country of first asylum.” (Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Outline of the Third-Country Resettlement Program”, October 2022).

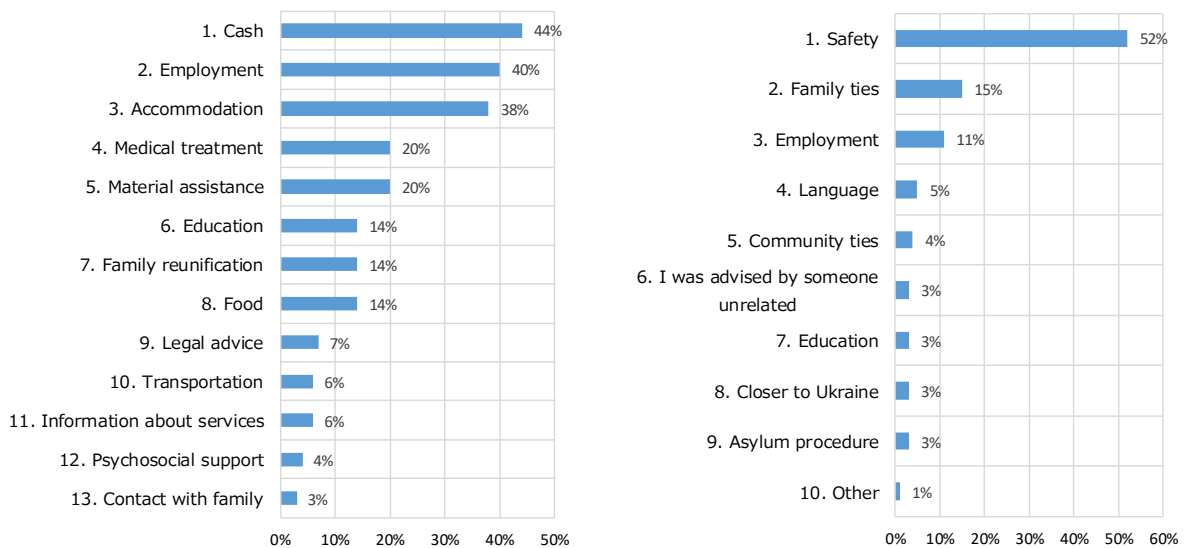
refugees” as defined under the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees (particularly in regard to convention refugee status, it seems that Ukrainian refugees do not fit the definition of the UN convention and protocol<sup>3</sup>). To begin with, it should be noted that special measures are being taken in Japan within the framework of international cooperation.

### 1-1. The current situation

According to the July 2022 report of a United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) survey of Ukrainian refugees who fled to European countries<sup>4</sup>, 82% of respondents had left their families behind in Ukraine, while 88% hope to return home.

When refugees first enter the host country they need cash, employment, and housing (Figure 1, left), and the same will be true for refugees in Japan. The Japanese government is allocating 1.9 billion yen from a fiscal 2022 budget reserve to provide living expenses and temporary accommodation for Ukrainian refugees<sup>5</sup>. As an example of a private-sector provider, the Nippon Foundation is offering guaranteed assistance with travel, living, and housing costs to 1,810 refugees with the fidelity guarantee (as of January 18, 2023). The Pasona Group staffing agency has also launched a project specifically for Ukrainian refugees, and has established a fund to assist them with travel and living expenses. In addition, Pan Pacific International Holdings, which operates the Don Quijote discount store chain, will host 100 displaced families and provide them with employment opportunities and housing on a long-term basis.

Figure 1: "Main urgent needs" (left) and "main reason for choosing/staying in host country" (right) reported by Ukrainians seeking refuge in Europe: n=4,871



Source: UNHCR (2022) , LIVES ON HOLD: PROFILES AND INTENTIONS OF REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE

Meanwhile, “safety” is the leading reason given by the refugees for choosing and staying in the host country (Figure 1, right). It is natural for the people who have fled the horrors of war, but they have also been forced to

<sup>3</sup> “Individuals leaving their country of nationality due to a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or because of political opinion, and who cannot be protected by, or do not seek the protection of, their country of nationality.” Source: Immigration Services Agency of Japan, “Refugee Recognition System”

<sup>4</sup> UNHCR (2022) LIVES ON HOLD: PROFILES AND INTENTIONS OF REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE p.3, 17. The six countries covered by the survey were the Czech Republic, Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia, all of which have taken in a large number of refugees from Ukraine.

<sup>5</sup> Approved by the cabinet on June 28, 2022. In addition, the Japanese government contributed a total of \$200 million to international organizations such as the UNHCR and IOM.

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Additional Emergency Humanitarian Assistance in Ukraine and Neighboring Countries”, April 5, 2022

extend their stay in the host countries due to the progress of the war<sup>6</sup>. Cumulative foreign remittances to Ukraine from Poland, the US, the UK, and other countries are expected to reach \$22.18 billion in 2022, a year-on-year increase of 22%<sup>7</sup>. The increase is thought to be attributable to the remittance of wages earned by refugees to their family members remaining in Ukraine.

In Japan, too, companies, organizations, and individuals have begun to provide support, and are accepting refugees from various walks of life, including researchers<sup>8</sup> and artists<sup>9</sup>. To maintain employment and livelihoods, it has become necessary for refugees to acquire “language” and build “community ties”, two factors which were not considered so important when they first arrived in the country.

## 1-2. Direction of system reform

Currently, the Japanese government grants two categories of status of residence to Ukrainian refugees: They are first granted “Temporary Visitor” status (for 90 days), followed by “Designated Activities” status (for 1 year). Thereafter, the term of stay is expected to be extended as appropriate.

With respect to the relationship between sending and receiving refugees and displaced persons, the burden of acceptance tends to be heavier in countries bordering the refugees’ home country, as is the case with Syria and Turkey, Myanmar and Bangladesh, and Ukraine and Poland<sup>10</sup>. Although Japan is geographically far from Ukraine, the number of refugees being accepted is increasing. The Japanese government has long sought to establish procedures to allow foreign nationals who are not recognized as refugees under the Refugee Convention but who should nevertheless be protected in the same way to reside in Japan<sup>11</sup>. Specifically, such measures are referred to as “complementary protection”, a concept that is also recognized by the UNHCR, which proposes that “measures to provide complementary protection should be implemented in a manner that strengthens...the existing international refugee protection regime”<sup>12</sup>. From the perspective of reducing the burden on specific countries and thereby strengthening the international refugee protection system, this report will focus on the future reform of the system in Japan.

## 2. Issues with migrant integration in Japan as revealed by international indicators

For Japan to continue accepting Ukrainian refugees, it will be important to have a functioning migrant integration policy to meet the need for employment, medical treatment, education, and other requirements that can be seen

<sup>6</sup> “Ukraine war refugees asked not to return this winter” BBC, UK, October 25, 2022

<sup>7</sup> World Bank Morning Seminar #144 “Migration and Development. A War in a Pandemic: Implications of the Ukraine crisis and COVID-19 on global governance of migration and remittance flows” (<https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/dacfb90f9a30182076bc1c99c3d9c15-0360012022/original/A-War-in-a-Pandemic.pdf>) accessed January 12, 2023

<sup>8</sup> “The desire of a professor working hard to accept students from conflict zones to provide opportunities to Ukrainian researchers” The Asahi Shimbun GLOBE+, July 22, 2022.

<sup>9</sup> “Guided by the spirit of ballet, Ukrainian ballet dancers evacuate to Awaji Island and dance with a prayer for peace” The Nihon Keizai Shimbun, October 17, 2022

<sup>10</sup> As of January 10, 2023, the total number of Ukrainian refugees stood at 8,031,966 (17,409,643 displaced, 9,376,677 returned), of which 1,563,386 (19.5%) are being sheltered in Poland.

Source: UNHCR OPERATIONAL DATA PORTAL – UKRAINE REFUGEE SITUATION, accessed January 12, 2023 ([https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine#\\_ga=2.75500061.968298331.1670662931-1908084889.1669001786](https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine#_ga=2.75500061.968298331.1670662931-1908084889.1669001786))

<sup>11</sup> “For persons who are not recognized as refugees under the Refugee Convention but are in need of international protection, the creation of a new legal framework for granting them legal status equivalent to that of refugees should be considered, taking into account the direction of trend in the international community, and in light of norms under international human rights law, and referring to the efforts of the United Nations, international human rights treaty bodies, and European countries.” In addition to statements by the Ministry of Justice, there have been various media reports and discussions regarding the connection between the creation of a new legal framework and the acceptance of refugees from Ukraine.

Source: Immigration Services Agency of Japan, “Future approach to immigration management”, 7th Immigration Policy Discussion December 2020, p.21

<sup>12</sup> UNHCR Executive Committee Conclusion No. 103, “Conclusion on the Provision of International Protection Including Through Complementary Forms of Protection”, October 7, 2005, (k) (<https://www.unhcr.org/jp/wp-content/uploads/sites/34/2018/03/103-2005i.pdf>) accessed December 21, 2022

from Figure 1. This section seeks to identify the issues involved based on the evaluation of Japan by the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX).

MIPEX is an index for evaluating the migrant integration policies of countries around the world developed by two think tanks, the Migration Policy Group in Belgium, and Spain's Barcelona Centre for International Affairs with the support of the EU<sup>13</sup>. It encompasses 167 indicators across eight areas, including the labor market and healthcare. The indicators are evaluated individually, and an overall evaluation is calculated. Japan's overall ranking in the 2020 index, which covers 56 countries, is relatively low at 35th place, due to issues identified mainly in the areas of education, political participation, and anti-discrimination, and it comes under the classification "immigration without integration" (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Summary of the 2020 Migrant Immigration Policy Index (MIPEX):  
A comparison of Japan and Poland (Ukraine's neighbor) with the top ten countries**

Ranking	Country	Overall (Note 1)	① Labor market mobility	② Family reunion	③ Education	④ Health	⑤ Political participation	⑥ Permanent residence	⑦ Access to nationality	⑧ Anti-discrimination	Approach to integration (Note)
1	Sweden	86 (- 1)	91	71	93	83	80	90	83	100	Comprehensive integration
2	Finland	85 (+ 3)	91	67	88	67	95	96	74	100	Comprehensive integration
3	Portugal	81 (+ 3)	94	87	69	65	80	71	86	100	Comprehensive integration
4	Canada	80 (+ 2)	76	88	86	73	50	77	88	100	Comprehensive integration
5	New Zealand	77 (± 0)	59	74	76	83	85	63	92	88	Comprehensive integration
6	US	73 (- 2)	69	62	83	79	40	63	88	97	Comprehensive integration
7	Norway	69 (- 3)	85	58	71	75	80	71	50	65	Comprehensive integration
8	Belgium	69 (± 0)	56	48	74	73	65	75	65	100	Comprehensive integration
9	Australia	65 (- 4)	37	68	79	79	65	46	76	69	Comprehensive integration
10	Brazil	64 (+12)	67	94	14	31	35	96	91	85	Comprehensive integration
35	Japan	47 (+ 1)	59	62	33	65	30	63	47	16	Immigration without integration
44	Poland	40 (- 1)	31	58	33	27	10	50	50	63	Equality on paper

\* Note 1: A perfect score is 100. The average of the scores in categories ① to ⑧. The value in parentheses indicates the change from the score in the previous index (2014).

\* Note 2: The result of the evaluation of a host country's situation based on a comparison between its nationals and migrants can be broadly divided into the following four categories.

1. Comprehensive integration: Migrants enjoy basic rights (e.g., work), equal opportunities (e.g., education), and a secure future (e.g., permanent residence).
2. Equality on paper: Migrants enjoy basic rights and a secure future, but lack equal opportunities.
3. Temporary integration: Migrants enjoy basic rights and equal opportunities, but do not have a secure future.
4. Immigration without Integration: Even when settled long-term, migrants do not have basic rights and equal opportunities.

Source: MIGRATION POLICY GROUP *MIGRATION INTEGRATION POLICY INDEX 2020*

(<https://www.mipex.eu/sites/default/files/downloads/pdf/files/a5/mipex-2020-book-a5.pdf>) accessed January 12, 2023

Migrant integration policies require a constant effort to take immigration dynamics into account. For example, Sweden, which led the rankings in the 2020 index, has seen a rapid increase in the number of migrants it has taken in for reasons such as the Syrian civil war in the 2010s. Rising crime, which is seen to be a consequence of the rapid increase in immigration, has become a political issue in Sweden, and a far-right party with an anti-immigrant platform made headway in the September 2022 parliamentary elections<sup>14</sup>. Attention is focused on whether the country can avoid a critical situation in which society becomes divided<sup>15</sup>, and one of the key responses is considered to be providing Swedish language education for immigrants.

<sup>13</sup> A total of 205 researchers from 55 countries participate in creating the index. From Japan, the list of contributors includes Professor Atsushi Kondo, Faculty of Law, Meijo University, and Professor Keizo Yamawaki, Faculty of Global Japanese Studies, Meiji University.

Source: MIGRATION POLICY GROUP & BARCELONA CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS (2020) *MIGRANT INTEGRATION POLICY INDEX 2020 – Measuring POLICIES TO INTEGRATE MIGRANTS* across six continents, pp.273-276 (<https://www.mipex.eu/sites/default/files/downloads/pdf/files/a5/mipex-2020-book-a5.pdf>) accessed January 12, 2023

<sup>14</sup> "Crime surge becoming an election focus – Swedish PM: 'Integration of immigrants has failed'", Jiji Press, September 10, 2022

<sup>15</sup> "The Future of Growth" On the Ground in Northern Europe (4) Seeking a way to avoid division: The immigration issue shaking the leading 'happiest countries'", Nihon Keizai Shimbun December 9, 2022

In recognition of this situation, the following section will focus on education, one of the three areas mentioned above responsible for Japan's relatively low score in the index<sup>16</sup>. Examples of initiatives by companies will be presented, taking into account their response to the influx of Ukrainian refugees, with a focus on measures relating to Japanese language education, an area in which there has been prominent activity in recent years.

### **3. Examples of Japanese language education initiatives by domestic companies with the potential to resolve issues**

In 2016, a bipartisan Diet Members Caucus for the Promotion of Japanese Language Education was established, led by Diet members who had previously served as Ministers of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology. As a result of the work of the caucus, a draft law on the promotion of Japanese-language education submitted by House members was passed unanimously by both the House of Representatives and the House of Councillors and enacted in 2019. The law stipulates that the Japanese government will take the necessary financial measures for implementation, and allows the government to compensate for any social costs incurred as a result of accepting foreign nationals (internalization of external diseconomy). Some cases where government funds have been invested are described below as evidence supporting the possibility that the issues identified in the preceding section can be resolved.

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) stresses the importance of integrating language education and vocational training for migrants and cooperation between national governments and employer companies and organizations<sup>17</sup>. A summary of the status of implementation of three types of vocational language training, i.e., (1) general vocational language courses, (2) specific vocational language courses, and (3) on-the-job training (OJT) language courses, by the governments of the 37 OECD member countries shows five countries, Sweden, Finland, Norway, Germany, and Israel, to be fully compliant in all three categories (Japan is seen to be lacking in relation to category 3). The OECD considers the efforts of the German government to work with companies to be particularly effective. It also cites the example of the online courses provided by Germany's Federal Office for Migration and Refugees in cooperation with Deutsche Telekom, which encourage migrants to simultaneously learn German and information technology.

With regard to Japanese language education for foreign nationals, Japanese companies are legally obligated to provide opportunities for employment to foreigners who have obtained the "specified skilled worker" status of residence (established in 2019), and in many cases, are enlisting the cooperation of NPOs and other local and voluntary organizations (Figure 3).

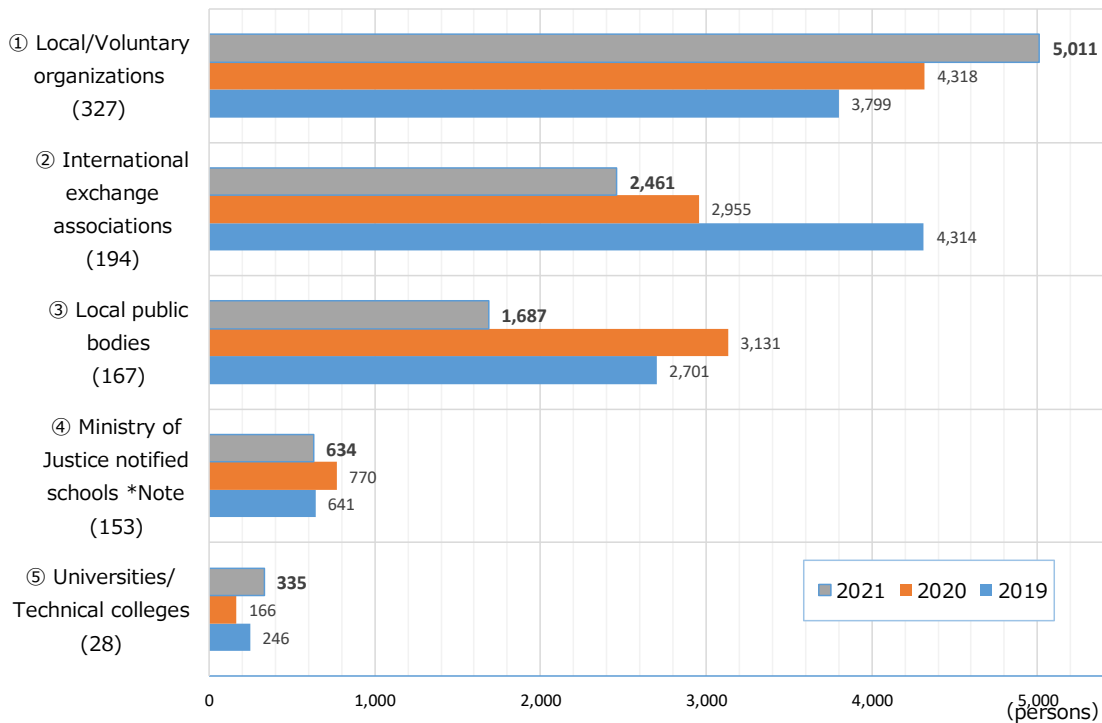
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<sup>16</sup> For example, in the case of "political participation" there is a view that this includes the possibility of different policy options depending on the country concerned, and it not necessarily the case that the higher the MIPEX index the better. Due to space limitations, this report will not go into detail.

Source: Reiko Hayashi (2022) "Statistical foundation for immigration policy", Migration Policy Review Vol. 14, p.30

<sup>17</sup> OECD (2021) 6. Integrate language with vocational training and co-operate with employers, Making Integration Work Language Training for Adult Migrants, pp.40-49

**Figure 3: Number of Japanese language learners in the business sector by educational institution (figures in parentheses are the number of institutions in FY2021)**



\*Note. Institutions that satisfy the criteria for granting permission for "Student" status of residence (class hours, number of teachers, etc.). In addition to schools, they may also be established by corporations and individuals.

Source: Agency for Cultural Affairs, Council for Cultural Affairs, 116th Subcommittee on Japanese Language Education, November 22, 2022, "Reference Material 2," p.11 ([https://www.bunka.go.jp/seisaku/bunkashingikai/kokugo/nihongo/nihongo\\_116/pdf/93793601\\_10.pdf](https://www.bunka.go.jp/seisaku/bunkashingikai/kokugo/nihongo/nihongo_116/pdf/93793601_10.pdf)) accessed January 12, 2023

In this connection, the Japanese government allocated 4.1 billion yen for the “Online Japanese Language Education Demonstration Project in Living with Corona” as a supplementary budget for FY2021. This program, which had a budget four times that of the approximately 1 billion yen annual budget for all Japanese language education policies<sup>18</sup>, attracted applications from a number of companies in cooperation with Japanese-language education-related organizations, and six companies were selected to take part (Figure 4). Although the program was initially targeted primarily at pre-arrival education for foreign students, it is also being used for the initial Japanese language education required by Ukrainian refugees for day-to-day living.

**Figure 4: Six companies selected for the Japanese government's "Online Japanese Language Education Demonstration Project in Living with Corona"**

	Selected organization	Partner organization
1	NTT Learning Systems Corporation	ZGNK.ORG The National Association of Colleges for Japanese Language Education
2	West Japan Marketing Communications Inc.	Japanese Language School Association
3	JTB Corp.	Association for Non-profit Japanese Language Schools
4	Kinki Nippon Tourist Co., Ltd.	—
5	Toppa Printing Co., Ltd.	Association for the Promotion of Japanese Language Education
6	Mitsubishi UFJ Research & Consulting Co., Ltd.	—

Source: Agency for Cultural Affairs ([https://www.bunka.go.jp/seisaku/kokugo\\_nihongo/kyoiku/93658501.html](https://www.bunka.go.jp/seisaku/kokugo_nihongo/kyoiku/93658501.html)) accessed January 12, 2023

<sup>18</sup> This represents an almost five-fold increase from the approximately 200 million yen budgeted for 2019 when the Act on Promotion of Japanese Language Education was enacted.

Companies are now seen not only as employers of foreign nationals, but also as providers of Japanese language education-related services. Of the leading companies in the telecommunications, transportation, tourism, printing, and service industries selected for participation, the efforts of Toppan Printing are particularly noteworthy. The company was commissioned by the Agency for Cultural Affairs to design and operate an online Japanese language learning site *Tsunagaru Hirogaru Nihongo de no Kurashi*<sup>19</sup> separately from the program, and it subsequently released a Ukrainian version after the arrival of Ukrainian refugees. Alongside the continued development of such initiatives, new entrants are expected to emerge.

#### 4. Future prospects in light of the historical significance of Japan's acceptance of refugees

The acceptance of Indochinese refugees mentioned in section 1. above led to the Japanese government's accession to the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1981) and to the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees (1982). Legislation followed the facts on the ground, and provisions relating to the recognition of refugees were added to what was then the Immigration Control Order, which was revised to become the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act. In a related development, nationality requirements were removed from laws and regulations relating to social security (National Pension Act, Child Rearing Allowance Act), and this also had ramifications for the review of rights and obligations pertaining to foreign nationals, which is the cornerstone of migrant integration policy. Japan was the first Asian country to apply the third-country resettlement system, also mentioned in section 1. above, which is being used to accept Myanmar refugees via Thailand and Malaysia. These are reminders that the development of domestic legislation pertaining to refugees and displaced persons is inextricably linked to the prevailing international situation.

As mentioned in 1.-2 above, the acceptance of Ukrainian refugees, which is the situation currently faced by Japan, is a landmark event that even heightens calls to expand Japan's preparedness by establishing a complementary protection system. The Russia-Ukraine conflict continues to rage, and the number of refugees being taken in by Japan is increasing. It will be necessary to further strengthen coordination and cooperation between the government, which designs relevant legislation, local governments, which execute projects, companies, which provide employment and services, and NPOs, which support people's livelihoods.

This situation could be an opportunity to address Japan's migrant integration policy challenges, or in other words, to improve the ability of the domestic economy and society to respond to the country's foreign population as a whole. Comprehensive action by all parties involved could be expected to lead to the creation of a society that embraces diversity<sup>20</sup>. For companies that emphasize multi-stakeholder relationships, humanitarian action in concert with the international community should also accord with the expectations and the awareness of social norms of institutional investors in terms of the "S" element (Society) in the so-called ESG factors.

<sup>19</sup> Agency for Cultural Affairs, "Japanese Language Learning Site for 'Foreigners as Residents': Tsunagaru Hirogaru Nihongo de no Kurashi"

A total of 17 languages are supported, including Chinese and Korean, allowing students to learn according to their proficiency level and life situations.

(<https://tsunagarujp.bunka.go.jp/>) accessed January 12, 2023

<sup>20</sup> In promoting such action, a so-called collective impact framework, for example, could prove helpful. This framework is defined as "a commitment made to a common agenda by a group of key players from different sectors (industry, government, academia, etc.) for the purpose of solving a specific social issue. The five conditions for the success of this model are said to be: (1) a common agenda, (2) shared measurement systems, (3) mutually reinforcing activities, (4) continuous communication, and (5) backbone support organizations.

Source: John Kania, Mark Kramer (2001) [2011] Translated by Kimiko Tomono "Collective Impact: Now is the Time to Create a New Future Beyond Individual Efforts," "Let's Find a Way to Change Society for the Future", Stanford Social Innovation Review – Best 10 Selection" Eiji Press, pp. 166-178