

[Report]

Oji Holdings Corporation

Results of Interviews with Foreign Workers

~As part of the Human Rights Impact Assessment

Tuesday, March 14, 2023

CAUX  ROUND TABLE

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# 1. Overview

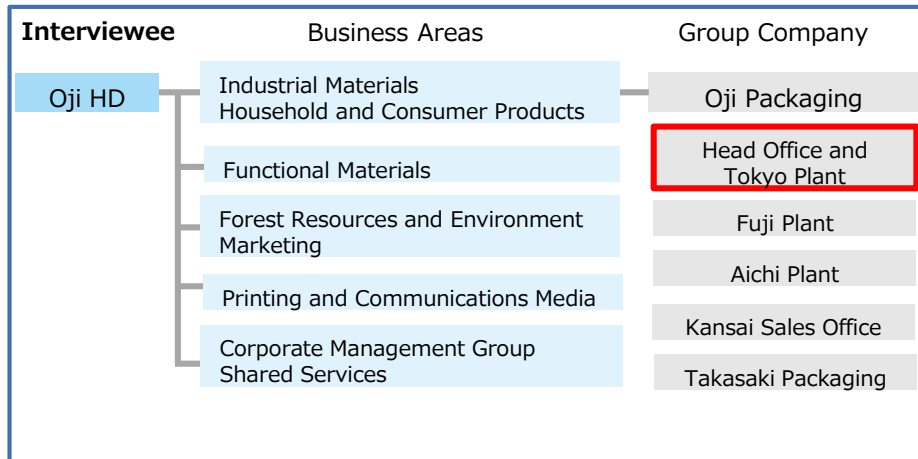
# Overview

Considering the potential human rights risks of foreign workers in Japan, Oji Holdings conducted a survey of its domestic consolidated companies last year to investigate their employment status and legal compliance. Focusing on foreign technical intern trainees, who are often placed in a vulnerable position according to the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry’s “Guidelines for Respect for Human Rights,” interviews were conducted with a total of eight technical intern trainees working at Oji Packaging, which employs the largest number of technical intern trainees in the Oji Group, to ascertain their actual working conditions. After the interviews, feedback was provided to a total of three managers.

To ensure objectivity and neutrality, the interviews were conducted by CRT Japan as a third party.

In addition, the female interviewer asked questions that included sensitive content for female workers, with the male interviewer out of the room.

The interview overview is shown on the right.



Interviewee:	Oji Packaging Co.,Ltd.
Date and Time	Thursday, February 16, 2023  14:10-14:55 Technical intern trainee interview (1) 15:05-15:50 Technical intern trainee interview (2) 15:50-16:20 Feedback to managers
Format	Face-to-face group interview 40-45 minutes
Place	Presentation room at Tokyo Plant, Oji Packaging Co.,Ltd.
Interviewer (gender, nationality)	8 trainees (female, Thailand) engaged in on-site work
Language used	Japanese, Thai *Interpretation by supervising organization
interviewer	CRT Japan Ishida (male), Ode (female)

# Interview Questions

Profile	Name, gender, hometown/nationality, language spoken Japanese comprehension (speaking and writing level) Family, place of residence, frequency of return visits work schedule
Introduction	How, why and when did you come to Japan? Where did you study Japanese? How did you find your job here? How long have you been working here? What visa(s) are you currently working on? What is your job description?
Questionnaire	Decent working time/ forced labor Decent wages Employment contract Health and safety in the workplace Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining Communication Other
	What is your work schedule and working hours? Is there any overtime work? Are you forced to work overtime? Are you taking time off to rest your body? Is your salary paid on time and in the amount as contracted? If overtime is worked, is overtime paid? Was the employment contract written in a language you could understand? Where do you remember your sense of accomplishment at work? Have you ever felt that your job was dangerous or hazardous? When do you find it hard to do your job? Do you have any dissatisfaction with your job? Is there a point of contact Where you can raise your concerns with the company without dear of retaliation? Do you feel that the company is working to improve the work environment? Do you feel you have adequate communication with your company and supervisor? Do you have a good relationship with the Japanese staff and team? When you are very tired, have a problem, or have a bad day, is there someone at work you can talk to? When you have a problem, who do you talk to about how to deal with it? Have you ever seen someone in a difficult situation at work (is it a specific group of people)? Has anyone ever asked you for advice about a difficult situation? What would you do if someone asked you for help? Do you have any opinions about the company (areas for improvement, etc.)? Are measures being taken to prevent the spread of COVID19 infection in your workplace? Tell us about your living environment. Would you be willing to refer this job to someone else?

## 2. Interview Results

# Overall Review

## Decent working time and forced labor / Decent wages

Long working hours and forced overtime were not identified. Working hours are fixed and a regular work schedule is maintained. Workers can refuse overtime. Overtime hours are fixed at approximately 1 hour and 45 minutes. Saturdays and Sundays are days off.

Wages are paid on the 25th of each month, along with overtime, and there are no delays in payment. Workers receive pay slips (written in Japanese) and check the breakdown of their wages. All of the technical intern trainees interviewed are saving and/or sending money back to their home country. In addition, since they can afford to spend holidays and long weekends as they wish, it can be said that a decent wage and a living wage are guaranteed at the time of the interview. On the other hand, several participants pointed out that prices in Japan have been rising, and it is necessary to confirm from time to time whether the wage level is such that a living wage is guaranteed.

## Safe recruitment / Employment contracts

There are no discrepancies between the job descriptions that the trainees had imagined prior to the start of the technical training and the actual job descriptions. The sending organization reads the employment contract with the trainees, and the trainees signs it after understanding its contents.

## Health and safety in the workplace

No work under hazardous conditions was identified. In addition, the work is performed in an air-conditioned room, where the room temperature is adjusted and comfortable throughout the year. In addition, workers are able to leave early or take leave according to their menstrual periods or physical condition. The trainees commented that it is a environment where they can easily ask for help and advice. It can be said that this is a worker-friendly environment for women.

# Overall Review

## Freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining/communication

Onsite, workers communicate smoothly with each other, and any concerns can be discussed with the leader or a senior trainee. Some of the technical intern trainees interviewed had no problem communicating in Japanese, while others were able to understand questions more accurately with the help of an interpreter. Proficiency in Japanese varies from trainee to trainee. However, with communication among trainees and the generous support of Japanese leaders, all trainees are able to perform their duties regardless of their Japanese language abilities. In addition, the company provides support beyond on-site work, such as showing trainees around the area and accompanying them to the hospital so that they can make their lives comfortable life.

Trainees can talk to the company when they have something to discuss or communicate. Since the leaders work nearby at the workplace, they can easily ask for advice at any time. The fact that communication takes place is conducted in the company's internal operations and that there is a culture in which workers can easily ask for advice is one of the initiatives that can be highlighted, and it is healthy that the company is able to respond to and solve problems onsite in cooperation with workers' voices. It would be good to grasp the trends in the types of consultations that occur onsite, and to organize a series of actions, such as how they are resolved and what remedial measures are taken. It would be desirable if the company can report this to Oji Holdings. It is expected that the company will continue to show its attitude of always being available for consultation to trainees, and create an environment in which workers feel comfortable discussing problems and concerns early and without hesitation. Communicating that the company cares about foreign workers is important for building a trust base.

## Other

The relationship between the technical intern trainees and Japanese staff is good, and the company shows an attitude of positioning the trainees as an important asset and providing them with a favorable working and living environment. In addition, the trainees look up to and trust their leaders and Japanese employees as if they were their "mother" or "sister". Technical intern trainees commented that if they knew someone who wanted to work in Japan, they would recommend Oji Packaging Co., Ltd. to them. The reasons given were that the work environment is good, the dormitory is close, the salary and benefits are better than in Thailand, and the Japanese people are friendly. A cousin of one of the trainees, who was not interviewed this time, actually applied for a job at Oji Packaging Co., Ltd. This suggests that the working environment is highly satisfactory.



# Challenges and Countermeasures

- Technical intern trainees check the breakdown from their pay slips, but since they are written in Japanese, they use a translation tool to confirm the contents. It is not necessary to distribute the pay slips in Thai, but if a sample of how to read the slips is prepared in Thai, the trainees will be able to obtain more accurate information.
- All of the trainees interviewed save and/or send home a large portion of their monthly income. At present, they can afford to spend their days off as they wish, while saving and/or sending money home. However, through the interviews, concerns about rising prices were confirmed. It would be good to continue to communicate with them on a daily basis to check the situation to see if there has been any impact on their daily lives, such as cutting back on food expenses.
- When exchanging opinions with foreign workers, including technical intern trainees, it will be possible to further foster a relationship of trust by sharing time to sincerely face and listen to them as an attitude of respecting them the other party's position, in order to understand what they really mean party's true intentions. Hopefully, these efforts, alleviate the stress of foreign workers, create a comfortable working and living environment, and provide mental health care for them.
- Regarding the management of valuables of technical intern trainees, the company is required to provide a safe in which individuals can safely store their own valuables. It is important that the safe is provided regardless of whether the foreign worker actually uses it or not.
- Oji Holdings can demonstrate its group-wide commitment to respecting the human rights of employees by disclosing information on Oji Packaging's initiatives and the actual working environment for technical intern trainees, which were revealed in this interview, as a best practices at a group company.

# Interviews



# 3. Details of the Working Conditions of Foreign Workers

## Worker Interviews

### Decent working time /forced labor

- Work hours are 8:30 a.m. to 5:15 p.m. Breaks are taken as needed, with one 10-minute break in the afternoon. During the breaks, trainees use the restroom and eat snacks.
- Lunch break is 50 minutes. For lunch, trainees bring their own homemade lunch in from the dormitory.
- Trainees work overtime for approximately 1 hour and 45 minutes every day, but it is on a voluntary basis and they can be refused regardless of the reason, e.g., if you are not feeling well. In that case, they go home at 5:15 p.m., the end of the workday. However, in order to earn money, they are willing to work overtime.
- Trainees can take paid leave when they want though they need to apply for them in advance. If they want to call in sick or take a day off work, they contact the leader on LINE in the morning of the day.
- Saturdays and Sundays are days off. Trainees spend their days off cooking Thai food, going shopping, resting, and going out (Shinjuku, Harajuku, Shibuya, Asakusa, Skytree, Disneyland, Yokohama, etc.). Fuji, Kyoto, Osaka, and Odaiba are some of the other places they would like to visit.

### Decent wage/forced labor

- Wages are paid monthly on a set date (25th of each month) along with overtime. No delays in payment have occurred.
- The company issues pay slips. The pay slips are written in Japanese, so they use a google translate application to translate them into Thai and understand the contents. They check the social insurance premiums and utility charges that are deducted from their total amount paid paychecks and grasp the amount of take-home pay.
- They have some savings for themselves, but much of their salary is sent to their families in Thailand.
- Prices are rising. In addition, the Thai baht/yen exchange rate is no longer favorable compared to previous years. Some trainees have life insurance in Thailand.

### Contract of employment

- The employment contract was written in both Thai and Japanese. In addition, the sending organization read the employment contract together with trainees, and trainees signed it after understanding it, and came to Japan. There is no difference between the job description explained in advance and the actual job description.

## Worker Interviews (continued)

### Health and safety in the workplace

- The work varies from day to day, but basically it is line work of packing boxes. It is standing work. It can be tiring. Depending on the work, the boxes can be heavy, but trainees always have help from the people around.
- Trainees have never had a hard day at work. When not feeling well, they leave early or take a day off, and the company kindly agreed to let them do so.
- Even during menstruation, work is not a physical burden. The pain is usually tolerable. If the pain is severe, trainees have the option of leaving at lunch or leaving without working overtime. If leaving at noon, trainees inform the company during lunch break that they wish to leave and ask permission to leave early. This is an environment where it is easy to take a break and leave early. It is also an environment where it is easy to ask for permission. The company kindly agree to let them do so, saying, "sure."
- The room temperature is just right and the work environment is comfortable.
- The workforce is predominantly female, with 70% of employees being women. Trainees have never experienced discrimination or harassment regardless of gender or nationality.

### Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining

- Trainees can voice their opinion to the company.
- The basic description of the work process is included in the job description file for the job to which trainees are assigned on that day. For work that is being performed for the first time, they can ask and discuss any questions they may have and give opinions on how to perform the work.

### Communication

- It took trainees about two to three months to get used to work after coming to Japan-to be able to talk with coworkers. When arriving in Japan, it was difficult to get used to the company. Especially for the first term trainees, it was even more difficult because it was the company's first attempt. However, the leader (a Japanese woman) was very kind and supportive, and even took us to places where we ate, etc. The second-term trainees had seniors (first-term trainees), so it was easier for them to understand the work procedures.
- Trainees can easily ask the leader when they have questions about work. If they have a problem, they can always ask for help. The leader is like a sister or mother to them me and they can rely on her. The leader is always working nearby during the work and is easy to talk to.

# Worker Interviews (continued)

## Communication (continued)

- Work-related matters are discussed with the leader, while issues related to daily life are discussed first with the trainee members. In addition, there is a Japanese female employee on site who can provide advice on things trainees are not familiar with regarding daily life in Japan, such as where and what to buy.
- All the Japanese employees are very kind, they care for trainees like a daughter, they are like a relative aunt. Even when making a mistake, they say, "Don't worry".
- Writing daily report was more difficult than actual physical work when arriving in to Japan than to work with force. The amount of writing was not much, and it was mostly numbers, but the names of items were written in Japanese, and the daily report itself was written in Japanese mixed with Chinese characters, so it was difficult until they got used to it. Now they are used to it.

## Other

[Living environment]

- A room in a 13-story company housing building is used as a dormitory. The company housing is located on the company premises and is a 5-minute walk to the company. The surrounding area is convenient for transportation. The three first-term trainees who participated to the interview live together in a two-bedroom apartment. Since there are two bedrooms, one is shared by two people and the other is used by one person. There is no arguing. The second-term trainees live in a three-bedroom apartment shared by five trainees. There are three bedrooms, which are shared by two, two, and one person.
- Rent is 1,000 yen per month (utilities not included). Utility charges for each room are totaled by the company, divided equally by the number of tenants, and billed accordingly. In the case of a five-person room, the utility bill may be 50,000 yen (10,000 yen/person) in high months, but 10,000 yen (2,000 yen/person) in low months. Since the water bill is paid once every two months, the utility fee will inevitably be higher in those months.
- Valuables are stored and managed in their own bags. There is no safe. No loss of items has occurred.
- The kitchen is shared with other members of the same room. They go shopping to the supermarket on foot and cook their own meals (Thai food). The second-term trainees sometimes go to the first-term trainees' room to eat because the food prepared by the first-term trainees is delicious.
- When arriving in Japan, a male HR employee trainees met at the interview was kind enough to accompany them to the supermarket. When arriving in Japan, it was kind of the company to a complete set of toilet paper, tissues, and other small items in dorm rooms. There are no problems in daily life. The HR lady also took trainees to the hospital.

## Worker Interviews (continued)

### Other (continued)

- Trainees sleep on Japanese-style mattress. They would like to sleep on a bed if possible though they consider it luxury, because beds are used for sleeping in Thailand. However, if beds are placed in the room, there would be no more space in the room.
- Last month, January, some trainees were I paid less because there was a New Year's vacation and they were absent from work due to a COVID19 infection. They got infected when they went to Shibuya and Harajuku with their fellow interns. They went to the hospital. There was no fever, only a sore throat, and the symptom was mild. Two roommates in the dormitory were infected.

### [Future plans]

- Trainees would like to remain in Japan in the future because Japan is livable.
- Trainees would like to stay and continue working at Oji Packaging. The reasons include: good work environment, close proximity to the dormitory, better salary and treatment compared to Thailand, and friendly Japanese people. They wish for a long career at Oji Packaging.
- Because of the good environment, if trainees had the opportunity, they would refer people they know to work for Oji Packaging.
- Some trainees commented that they would like to go to a different country and challenge themselves.

## Comments from the Managers

- Oji Packaging started to accept the technical intern trainees in 2019, before the COVID19 pandemic. Oji Packaging started by accepting Vietnamese trainees and a year later began accepting Thai trainees. The supervising organization recommended that Oji Packaging accept non-Vietnamese trainees as well. The nationalities of the trainees are divided by gender, with male trainees being Vietnamese and female trainees being Thai.
- The employment contract is explained by the local sending organization in Thailand.
- There is one male and one female field leader. They support the trainees.
- In addition to the workplace, Oji Packaging also provides daily life support for trainees. For example, they accompany the trainees on their first visits to hospitals, as they may have difficulties in communication, such as filling out medical questionnaires, etc., and explaining symptoms.
- Valuables such as passports are managed by the interns themselves. No safe is provided.
- The male trainees live in dormitories, all in single rooms.
- Prior to the COVID19 pandemic, Oji Packaging conducted recruitment interviews locally overseas. Since the pandemic, the interviews have been conducted online.
- There have been times when an intern's cousin joined Oji Packaging as an intern as a technical intern.



# CAUX ROUND TABLE

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