

## ***Program toward the Realization of an Ondobo Society (Jissen Undo, Ondobo Program) Comprehensive Basic Plan and Core Projects***

### **1. Comprehensive Basic Plan**

The *Program toward the Realization of an Ondobo Society* (a society of fellow practitioners) is a measure promoted by the entire Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha organization with the aim of “*sharing with the others the wisdom and compassion of Amida Tathagata. By doing so, we shall work toward the realization in which everyone can live a life of spiritual fulfillment*” (*Shūsei* – Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha Constitution).

This program has been building upon the achievements and challenges of *Kikan Undo* (Core Program, 1986-2012), promoted for the purpose of “*aiming toward a society of Ondobo, founded on learning from Shinran Shonin, who lived with the Primal Vow as his ultimate refuge. Kikan Undo emphasized that all members should continuously listen to the Dharma and engage in propagation, thereby reforming both individual attitudes and the organizational structure of the Sangha. Furthermore, it encourages active engagement with social issues, particularly discrimination and other forms of inequality.*” Moreover, in *Ondobo* program, this initiative aims to further spread the Buddha’s teaching both within and beyond the organization. As a *Sangha of Ondobo*, it commits to addressing issues of war and peace, discrimination, and human rights, while expanding various activities in a more inclusive and dynamic manner. The program officially launched in April 2012 (Heisei 24).

In 2016 (Heisei 28), on the occasion of the Dento Hokoku Hoyo (Accession Ceremony), Gomonshu Sennyo delivered his message, *A Way of Living as a Nembutsu Follower*. In this message, he taught: “*sharing Amida Tathagata’s Wisdom and Compassion through simple and clear language with as many people as possible regardless of nationality and ethnic background. Let us encourage everyone to act in accordance with the Buddha’s Wish in an effort to create a society in which everyone can live a spiritually fulfilled life. In the hopes of creating a joyous world, let us continue moving forward by putting these words into action and together walk on our path to the truth.*” He further indicated that *A Way of Living as a Nembutsu Follower* aligns with the *Program toward the Realization of an Ondobo Society* (*Ondobo* program), which we have been actively engaged in.

When illuminated by the light of Amida Tathagata’s wisdom, we come to a profound realization that we cannot do a good act at all and never escape the world of suffering. At the same time, we also realize that we are embraced by Amida Tathagata’s boundless compassion precisely because of the way we truly are, which naturally fills us with immense joy and deep gratitude. Furthermore, we come to recognize that as long as we continue living in this world, we are engaged in actions every day. The society in which we live is the result of the actions we have taken, and there are people who suffer because of the way this society has been shaped. This suffering is not just someone else’s concern—it is a suffering in which we ourselves play a part. With this realization comes a deep sense of self examination and lamentation, knowing that we, too, contribute to the causes of suffering. Yet, in the joy of encountering the Buddha’s teaching and in this awareness of our own shortcomings, a new way of life opens before us—one in which we are sustained by the compassion of Amida Tathagata.

The *Sutra on the Buddha of Immeasurable Life* reveals that all living beings in every world are equally saved through the working of Amida Tathagata. Shinran Shonin, taking refuge in Amida Tathagata’s salvific working, called those who rejoiced together in the Nembutsu “*fellow practitioners*” (*ondōbō, ondōgyō*). Understanding that people in this world experience suffering, he also recognized himself within that suffering, stating, “*We are like stones, tiles and pebbles.*” He lived his life in solidarity with those who struggled. The concept of “*fellow practitioners*” reminds us to turn our attention towards the most vulnerable members of society. It is through this recognition that a true *Sangha* is formed. Following Shinran Shonin’s example, supporting one another and living together in mutual aid is precisely the way of life that is called upon for each and every one of us as Nembutsu practitioners.

It is essential for us to examine whether the issues of human rights and peace—fundamental to living together—are truly shared and upheld within the society that we ourselves have created. We must acknowledge that we have a history of complicity in war and the perpetuation of discrimination. Rather than relegating this history to a distant past, we must recognize it as a pressing issue for us who live in the present. This awareness reveals the ways in which we continue to turn away from peace and disregard human rights even today. Furthermore, each of us lives under different circumstances and in various contexts—shaped by our countries and regions, gender and family structures, occupations, generations, and the times we inhabit. While confronting our own unique challenges, we often contribute to alienation

and hinder the mutual resonance of life. Therefore, it is all the more crucial that each of us, guided by the Buddha's teachings, becomes aware of and discerns the forces that obstruct our ability to live in harmony with one another.

In contemporary society, human nature's tendency to exploit others and nature as mere tools or convenient means has intensified. This has led to an inability to embrace diverse values, resulting in deepening divisions and conflicts. We are confronted with a stark reality of suffering and sorrow, including recurring natural disasters, energy and environmental crises, economic disparity and poverty, suicide and social isolation, struggles with finding meaning in life, unconscious aggression, terrorism, armed conflicts, wars, and the oppression of human rights, including discrimination. Additionally, we face challenges such as demographic shifts, changing family structures, rural depopulation, declining birthrates, and an aging population in Japan. the need to connect with children and young people, international propagation efforts, and the simplification of Buddhist rituals in memorial services and funerals. These challenges have made our propagation efforts increasingly difficult.

In the face of the many challenges confronting both our lives in this world and the transmission of the true teaching, it is through concrete practice—grounded in the Buddha-Dharma—that we can truly realize a society in which “*everyone can live a life of spiritual fulfillment by means of sharing Amida Tathagata's wisdom and compassion.*” Gomonshu Sennyo has taught that living as one who is sustained by the Primal Vow means “*a transformation from a self-centered way of life that seeks only one's own peace of mind, to a way of life that shares in the suffering of others. From this transformation, the path of the Nembutsu follower is revealed—one that reveres the virtues of the Tathagata's Great Wisdom and Great Compassion as true and aspires to live in accordance with them.*” (*Message at the Closing Ceremony of the Commemoration of Shinran Shonin's 850th Birth Anniversary and the 800th Anniversary of the Establishment of the Jodo Shinshu Teaching*). With the collective wisdom of our Sangha, let us further advance the *Program toward the Realization of an Ondobo Society (Ondobo Program)* together.

## 2. Our slogan

We present a slogan that concisely expresses the purpose of the *Program toward the Realization of an Ondobo Society (Ondobo Program)*:

**“From tying bonds to great encounters”**

## 3. “Core Projects”

### (1) About “Core Projects”

The *Program toward the Realization of an Ondobo Society (Ondobo Program)* is an initiative in which all members of Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha organization participate and put into practice, embodying the fundamental principle stated in the *Shūsei – Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha Constitution*—to work toward the realization of the society in which everyone can live a life of spiritual fulfillment.

As part of this initiative, “Core Projects” are implemented based on the Comprehensive Basic Plan of Ondobo Program. These projects set specific goals and are carried out within a defined timeframe, aiming for concrete contributions to society.

This term, we will continue to uphold our approach of fostering a sense of unity within the organization by setting the overall goal in alignment with the spirit of Gomonshu's message, *A Way of Living as a Nembutsu Follower*. Our focus remains on “Overcoming Poverty, Dāna for World Peace: Nurturing Our Children” as our shared objective. By ensuring that all members of the organization recognize and address this issue together, we will work towards achieving our goals in each setting. Let us further develop and enhance “Core Projects,” making them even more meaningful.

On the other hand, the specific issues that require urgent attention vary by region. Therefore, each district (including the Okinawa Special District) and local regions may continue to set their own goals as needed. In such cases, while working on their independently established goals, they should also strive towards the organization-wide goal: “Overcoming Poverty, Dāna for World Peace: Nurturing Our Children.”

As we advance “Core Projects,” it is essential to foster greater engagement among ministers and lay members. By strengthening collaboration with affiliated associations such as the Buddhist Women's

Association, the Buddhist Association of Manhood (*Bukkyo Sonen Kai*), the Buddhist Federation of Childhood Education (*Hoiku Renmei*), and Vihara activity groups, as well as with local social welfare administrations and private organizations, we can deepen existing relationships and establish new ones. Ministers and lay members should work together to deepen their understanding of the Jodo Shinshu teaching, human rights, and peace, while addressing both doctrinal and social issues. Let us pool our wisdom to further revitalize each and every temple, local district, then region (including the Okinawa Special District).

## (2) Organization-wide Goal of “Core projects”

### **“Overcoming Poverty, Dāna for World Peace: Nurturing Our Children”**

Monshu Sennyo points out in his message, *A Way of Living as a Nembutsu Follower*, “economic disparity” as one of the critical global issues affecting humanity’s survival. The global economic divide, caused by the unequal distribution of wealth, has led to severe poverty, causing many people to suffer in sadness and distress. Children and the elderly, in particular, are heavily impacted due to their vulnerable positions. Moreover, the poverty resulting from this economic gap is a major factor that triggers conflicts and terrorism. Therefore, overcoming this challenge is essential to achieving a peaceful world where all people can live in harmony.

In Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha organization, we have long promoted initiatives for peace and nonviolence, including memorial services for war victims. Marking the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II in 2015 (Heisei 27), we engaged in a three-year period of deepening our studies of peace and conducting discussions on peace initiatives. Based on these efforts, we gathered diverse opinions through public hearings and other forums. As a result, from the perspective of striving for peace as a state in which the root causes of war—such as violence, poverty, discrimination, and inequality—are eliminated, it was comprehensively concluded that addressing poverty both domestically and internationally should be a key focus moving forward.

“Child poverty” refers to a form of poverty that children, who are in socially vulnerable positions, cannot overcome on their own. Moreover, such poverty tends to be passed down to future generations. As followers of the Nembutsu, we are called to stand by these children. Furthermore, with the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the United Nations, we are advancing efforts to solve poverty under the principle of “no one will be left behind.” As various organizations work together both domestically and internationally to tackle this issue, expectations for religious leaders to contribute are increasing.

Based on these realities, our organization established “Overcoming Poverty, Dāna for World Peace: Nurturing Our Children” as a Core Project goal in 2018 (Heisei 30), aiming to create initiatives that allow more individuals and temples to participate. With a global perspective and a long-term vision, we continue to take action based on the spirit of “dāna” (selfless giving), which has been cherished in Buddhism since the time of Shakyamuni Buddha. Starting with what we can do, we remain committed to overcoming both life-threatening poverty and the less visible forms of poverty that violate human rights.

As we approach 2025 (Reiwa 7), marking 80 years since the end of World War II, wars and conflicts persist around the world, deepening divisions and confrontations, while economic disparity and poverty remain pressing issues. Now more than ever, our efforts have become increasingly vital.

## (3) Implementation Period

From the 2024 (Reiwa 6) fiscal year to the 2027 (Reiwa 9) fiscal year (a total of four years).

- ◊ Various resources, including the “Comprehensive Basic Plan & Core Projects,” “Case Studies,” and “Summary Report on Kikan Undo,” can be downloaded from the Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha official website. We encourage you to refer them.