

《经济学人：日本如何鼓励生娃？》



Kishiki Noriyo pulls up outside a house in Akashi, a city in western Japan, in a truck emblazoned with a heart logo and the slogan: "Diaper delivery:

岸木野利洋开着一辆印有心形标志和口号“送尿布：我们也送善意”的卡车，停在日本西部城市明石市的一座房子外。

we also deliver kindness." She steps out with two bags of nappies.

她拿着两袋尿布走了出来。

Higuchi Miki, a young mother, appears at the front door with a baby on her hip.

年轻妈妈樋口美纪抱着一个婴儿在前门等候。

Ms Kishiki is on the front line of a ten-year push by Akashi to encourage its residents to have children.

岸木女士是明石市鼓励居民生育十年政策的一线人员。

It includes delivering free baby food as well as nappies, free medical care and school lunches.

这项政策包括提供免费婴儿食品、尿布、免费医疗和学校午餐。

The effort seems to be paying off.

这一努力似乎已见成效。

Akashi's population has increased for ten years in a row, to more than 300,000.

明石市的人口连续10年增长，超过了30万人。

This makes the town exceptional.

这让这个小镇变得与众不同。

Japan's birth rate dipped below the replacement level of 2.1 children per woman in the mid-1970s and has been steadily declining ever since.

自1970年代中期以来，日本的出生率一直低于每个妇女2.1个孩子的更替水平，并持续稳步下降。

In 2022 the total number of births dropped below 800,000 for the first time since records began in 1899.

2022 年，出生人口总数自1899年有记录以来首次降至 80 万以下。

Of Japan's 1,800 municipalities, only around 200 have a rising population.

在日本1800个城市中，只有约 200 个城市的人口在增长。

According to Kishida Fumio, the prime minister, this has put the country on "the brink".

日本首相岸田文雄表示，这将日本推到了“悬崖边上”。

Even in Akashi, which is an easy commute from the cities of Osaka and Kobe, most of the growth is from migration, not births.

在明石市，尽管距离大阪和神户等城市较近，通勤便利，但其人口增长主要来自移民，而非本地出生人口。

The town's birth rate is 1.65.

该镇的出生率为1.65。

Yet given that the national figure is 1.3, this represents success of a sort.

相比之下，全国平均出生率仅为1.3。这仍然可以视为某种程度的成功。

Schools are closing across Japan for want of pupils; Akashi is short of school places.

日本各地的学校因学生不足而关闭;而明石市却面临学校不足的问题。

Many of the obstacles to young Japanese forming families, from high education costs to inflexible family laws,

日本年轻人组建家庭面临许多障碍，例如高昂的教育成本、僵化的家庭法律等，

can only be tackled with national policies.

这些都只能通过国家政策来解决。

But Akashi shows how local communities can make a difference.

然而，明石市的例子却表明，地方社区也可以发挥作用。

That starts with improving access to nurseries and day care.

首先是改善托儿所和日托服务的便利性。

Smaller projects such as Ms Kishiki's, which assist parents of young children, also help.

像岸木女士这样帮助幼儿父母的小型项目也有帮助。

The population of Nagareyama, a commuter town outside Tokyo, is also booming.

流山市是一座位于东京郊外的通勤市，人口也在不断增长。

Over the past decade it has grown by 24%, to 211,000.

在过去10年中，该市人口增长了24%，达到21.1万人。

The opening of an express-train service to Tokyo in 2005 largely explains that.

这在很大程度上得益于2005年开往东京的特快列车通车。

But Nagareyama's commitment to child care—the "utmost priority" of its local government—has also attracted young families.

不过，流山市致力于提供儿童保育服务——当地政府的“重中之重”——也吸引了年轻家庭。

In 2007 the town launched a bus service that picks up children at train stations and takes them to day-care centres.

2007年，流山市推出了巴士服务，在火车站接送儿童到日托中心。

Nagareyama has increased its number of nurseries from 17 to more than 100 in the past 15 years.

过去15年间，流山市的托儿所数量从17个增加到了100多个。

"Our aim was to create an environment in which parents can continue to work while raising children," says Izaki Yoshiharu, the town's mayor.

流山市市长伊崎义治说：“我们的目标是创造一个环境，让父母在抚养孩子的同时还能继续工作。”

Lack of child care is endemic across Japan.

缺乏儿童保育在日本是一种普遍现象。

The central government has made some improvements in this regard, reducing the number of children waiting for a nursery place by 90%.

中央政府在这方面做了一些改进，将等待入托的儿童数量减少了90%。

It has also introduced tax and other economic incentives to encourage people to reproduce.

政府还出台了税收和其他经济激励措施来鼓励人们生育。

But, as scattered examples like Akashi and Nagareyama suggest, making a real difference requires a more fundamental shift.

但是，正如明石市和流山市等零星的例子所表明的那样，要想真正改变现状，还需要更根本性的转变。

Kato Hisakazu of Meiji University reckons Japan "needs to foster a culture that is

generous to children".

明治大学的加藤久和认为，日本“需要培养一种对儿童慷慨友善的文化”。

Efforts to build more child-care facilities are often blocked by locals who worry about increased noise.

建造更多托儿设施的努力常常受到当地人的阻挠，他们担心噪音会增加。

When Soup Stock, a popular restaurant chain, started offering free food for babies last April, it encountered a fierce online backlash from people who objected to the prospect of sitting next to crying infants.

去年4月，热门连锁餐厅Soup Stock开始为婴儿提供免费食物，却遭到了网友的强烈反对，他们不想与哭闹的婴儿坐在一起。

Tanaka Yumi, a mother of two in Nagareyama, says young Japanese parents are used to receiving a "cold look" from their unsympathetic neighbours.

田中由美是流山市的一位母亲，她有两个孩子。她说，日本年轻父母经常受到冷漠邻居的“冷眼相待”。

But the abundance of young families in the town and the supportive policies of its local administration provide reassurance, she says.

但她还说，流山市年轻家庭众多，当地政府的支持政策让人放心。

"I have many friends in Nagareyama who decided to have a second or a third."

“我在流山市有很多朋友，他们决定要第二个或第三个孩子”。

Akashi's pro-child efforts are intended to drive the same cultural change.

明石市在努力为儿童创建一个更加友好的环境，推动同样的文化变革。

Morioka Kazumi of the town's child-care department says the nappy deliveries are more about "alleviating loneliness" than the goods themselves.

明石市儿童保育部门的盛冈和美说，送尿布的目的更多是为了“缓解孤独感”，而不是物品本身。

Ms Higuchi, the young mother, appreciates that.

年轻的母亲Higuchi女士对此表示赞赏。

"It's nice when someone checks on me," she says.

“有人来看我真好，”她说。

"It makes me feel I'm on the right track."

“这让我觉得自己走在正确的道路上。”

重点词汇

house in 房屋；把…放在…

front door 前门；正门

on the front 在前面；在…战线

baby food 婴儿食品

as well as 以及，既…又…，除…之外，此外

free medical care 免费医疗

school lunches 学校午餐；school lunch的复数

paying off 放线

more than 超过，超出，超出……的；比……更；非常，极其；比……更重要；超出需要，超乎寻常

the town 城镇；小镇；城中大盗