

**Thematic Session  
Right to Housing**

**Discussion Paper**

**YOON Jongcheol**

**[Director, Gwangju Support Center for the Homeless]**

Since Gwangju Stand-Again General Support Center(hereinafter referred to as ‘the Center’) opened in April 2020, the Center has surveyed the status of the homeless in Gwangju and provided services for the homeless who needed an urgent support. The Center also launched a temporary shelter project for the homeless in October 2021, and has provided temporary shelters for 114 homeless people in terms of the actual number of persons and 1,035 homeless people in terms of person-years. The Center held a seminar to report on the status of the homeless in July 2021, and assessed themselves that they made a landmark achievement in 2020 in terms of the welfare for the homeless in Gwangju. For instance, the Center proposed an agenda titled ‘A Warm Home for Homeless Citizens’ in 2022. Since then, the Center has rented two units of tenement housing and is currently offering free-of-charge rental housing to the homeless citizens, who are willing to stand on their own feet, for about three months per person. In 2022, the Center began a special program to promote self-sufficiency of the homeless, which was participated by 59 homeless people in terms of the actual number of persons. The Center is also running a lunch box support project.

Homeless people who receive immediate support from social workers often come to stay in Jjokbang(a tiny one-room residence) or Dalbang(a monthly rent room of an inn or a small-scale accommodation). Some of the homeless who are in a slightly better situation stay in one-room housings, but a large majority of the homeless live in Jjokbang Village(tiny one-room residences in low-income neighborhoods). The homeless I met in the homeless self-sufficiency program were living in Jjokbang as well. In this regard, I proposed an agenda to carry out a project for improving the quality of living for the Jjokbang residents. I recall that when I visited Mr. Taek Lim, the head of Dong-gu District Office, to present this project idea and asked for his support, he said, “I always feel emotionally indebted to the Jjokbang Village.”

I support the first policy proposal of Mr. Yong-Hee Kim, the Secretary-General of the Gwangju Social Innovators Network, to launch a counselling center supporting residents in the informal residence in Dong-gu, Gwangju. I would also like to propose that we expand the functions of Gwangju Stand-Again General Support Center to encompass the entire city of Gwangju. To this end, it is necessary to accurately understand the current situations there and operate the relevant centers in alignment with healing programs, self-sufficiency programs, and diverse welfare resources. It is also required to implement an integrated housing strategy for

Gwangju regarding the residents of informal housing, along with intervention activities based on a comprehensive care plan as well as continuous housing and living coordinator programs, etc. I hope that diverse programs will be launched for the Jjokbang residents in Gwangju, whose issues were not fully discussed before. Such programs are not just the matter of a counselling/support center but an initiative that requires collaboration among different resource providers in the region. I wish that citizens of Gwangju including the homeless will benefit from the city's care service including human/physical/administrative support.

Activist Dong-Hyun Lee gave us a good explanation about the history of Jjokbang Villages focusing on Seoul in his presentation 'History and Reality of Jjokbang Villages'. I agree that the central government or the municipal government needs to actively engage in the relevant projects such as purchasing or renting housing. I also hope for a policy that is inclusive, not exclusive of the Jjokbang residents. Research Fellow Joojin Kim from LH Land & Housing Research Institute made a presentation through case examples, which will be greatly helpful for our Gwangju Jjokbang project. I hope that the Jjokbang Village will be renewed as a village that has its own community spirit, instead of an isolated island in the city.

According to the housing vulnerable including the homeless, it's not that there is no housing but that there is no one around them. In my view, the recent incidents in our society happened due to the absence of someone to talk to and to be with. Although a partial survey was conducted on the current status of Jjokbang in Gwangju a few years ago, the issues of Jjokbang have not been fully discussed. However, it is a relief that we have now begun to discuss the issues of Jjokbang residents. I wish that Jjokbang Village will turn to a village community, not an isolated island in the city.