

HELP Asian Women's Shelter Network News

2014/6/15
No.

75

Scripture

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.

Romans 8:26

Ms. A is a foreign national who entered HELP at the age of 17. Her father died when she was two years old, and she was adopted when she was six. She had little opportunity to go to school when she was younger as she had to look after her adoptive mother's children. Her adoptive mother remarried and the family moved to Japan for her stepfather's work when she was 17. She was rarely allowed to leave the house and was beaten by her adoptive mother. One night, when she and her mother went out, she was forced into prostitution.

Ms. A ran away from home and searched for help out on the streets. After having to spend one night outdoors, a kind stranger told her about an international organization and she was admitted to HELP. Because she was 17, the child welfare center gave temporary protective custody to HELP and provided for expenses. The center conducted a detailed interview with her and met with the family; it was decided that she should not be returned to them. From the start, Ms. A had no desire to either return to her family or her home country, but wanted to live her life in Japan.

However, there were a number of barriers in the system to achieving this desire. The day after her 18th birthday, the protection and expenses covered by the child welfare center abruptly ended. A request was made to the local government office for a female consultant and public assistance. However, the office replied that because Ms. A's immigration status was under a "family stay" visa, she was unqualified to receive benefits and consequently would receive absolutely no support. Our staff asked for an exceptional accommodation known as humanitarian assistance, which was available in other districts, but to no avail. HELP was left having to bear all responsibility and privately support Ms. A.

Nevertheless, an international organization asked a pro bono legal firm called "Japan Legal Support Center" to apply for a change in Ms. A's visa status from family stay to long-term residence at the Tokyo Immigration Bureau. Humanitarian consideration as a human trafficking victim was requested. Once again, Ms. A had to undergo detailed interviewing. The police also came to question her because they had doubts about trafficking in persons.

Ms. A's visa status was changed to long-term residence eight months after she was admitted to HELP. Following completion of public assistance applications and other procedures, after 10 months with us she moved to a different facility. Before long, she contacted us with the news that she had found a maid's position at a hotel and started attending night classes for junior high school.

During her time at HELP, Ms. A was filled with uncertainty. Despite this, she learned from other residents about the difficulties of life in Japan and what types of jobs she might be able to do, while studying Japanese and preparing for her next steps. As well as being a shelter for non-Japanese women who have fallen between the legal cracks, this demonstrates HELP's ability to be a space for discovering a new identity, as Ms. A was able to do.

Rev. Hiroko UEDA
Director
HELP Asian Women's Shelter

An Overview of the Beneficiaries of HELP in FY2014

～ Number of Pregnant Foreign Nationals Rises & Girls on the Streets Due to Parental Abuse ～

In FY2014, HELP provided sanctuary for 89 beneficiaries – 12 women of non-Japanese nationalities, 59 Japanese women and 18 accompanying children. This represents 2,219 nights, or a 118.3% increase from FY2013. HELP provided year-around programs to support the mind and body, including music therapy, herbal therapy and aromatherapy, as well as flower arrangement classes upon request.

The percentage of total residents accompanied to medical facilities by HELP staff in order to ensure the safety of female victims of domestic violence or for other reasons fell to 20.32% compared to FY2013 (35%); however, the accompaniment rate increased to 50% for foreign women from the previous year's 33%.

<Non-Japanese Nationals Female>

Five of the total 12 non-Japanese residents brought children to the shelter. Of these nine children, over 60% were under the age of ten years old, though all ages reside at the shelter.

Intimate partner violence was the number one reason for seeking shelter among non-Japanese national women (50%). This was followed by pregnancy at 25%, marking a dramatic rise compared to only 3% in FY2013. The fact that consultation topics for non-Japanese women are now the same as for Japanese women reflects the permanent residency of non-Japanese nationals in Japan. Other reasons for taking refuge were homelessness (16.7%) and human-trafficking (8.3%).

The average stay for all non-Japanese nationals was 38.14 days. The reason for this near 15-day increase over the previous year was one minor who fell between the bureaucratic cracks of the system and required extended help in resolving various issues.

- DV victims: In FY2014, we sheltered mothers accompanied by elementary- and junior high school-age children as well as those bringing premature infants. In order for children to be ready for the new school term, together with relevant organizations we took steps to ensure family safety, assist in finding housing and offer other forms of assistance. Additionally, with the cooperation of local police, HELP staff recovered personal ID that had been confiscated by perpetrators and also offered language and childcare support so that residents needing medical care could have same-day surgery.
- Pregnancy: We admitted women in their first, second and third trimesters of pregnancy. When non-Japanese women decide on a birth hospital at their third trimester, medical institutions require that they have an interpreter with them during examinations. This has proved challenging for local governments without a budget for translation services. Aid organizations for non-Japanese nationals have enabled a support system for examinations and health guidance through requesting compatriots who have given birth in Japan to act as interpreters.
- No dwelling place: The length of stay for those women admitted in FY2014 was relatively short; most had “short-term stay” or “permanent” residency status.
- Aftercare: Through the cooperation of other organizations, we held a cherry blossom-viewing party and celebrated other seasonal festivities in FY2014. And, for the first time in a few summers, we went for a day at the beach; high school volunteers also helped to provide “An Unforgettable Day” for the children. We again received sponsorship for fun events such as the FY2013 trip to Disneyland. We continued our work finding places for former residents to live, assisting women in divorce procedures in their home countries and offering other forms of aftercare.

<Japanese Nationals Female>

Six of the 59 Japanese nationals were accompanied by children. As in previous years, the top reason for seeking sanctuary at HELP was homelessness at 54.2%, with intimate-partner violence next at 22.0%. These reasons were followed by pregnancy (13.6%), violence at the hand of family members (6.8%) and stalking (3.4%), making for similar overall percentages as FY2013.

The average length of stay remained high at 22.51 days (two days less than the previous year). HELP sheltered not only those facing critical and/or dangerous situations such as domestic violence; there was an increase in those needing lodging facilities such as young women near birth and elderly women with no place to go after being released from the hospital.

We have seen a worrisome trend among pregnant women who have entered HELP without having set out plans for raising their children. When they have reached the child-rearing stage after having given birth, their past drug addictions and/or unstable relationships with their parents become apparent through under-developed communication skills.

As for minors, we occasionally come across cases in which although public assistance seems appropriate for that individual's particular situation, the local government makes a decision to prioritize other benefits, which then forces the minor out into the streets. When a welfare-related institution stubbornly refuses to take even one step beyond the scope of its duties, then the women who need that support face the harsh reality of living in poverty no matter how diligently they work. We strongly believe that a real discussion concerning what contributes to the individual's best interest is needed.

<Telephone Counseling>

Twenty-nine countries including Japan were represented in the FY2014 telephone consultations, for a total of 694 calls. We believe that this growth in calls was due to the increase in HELP staff responders.

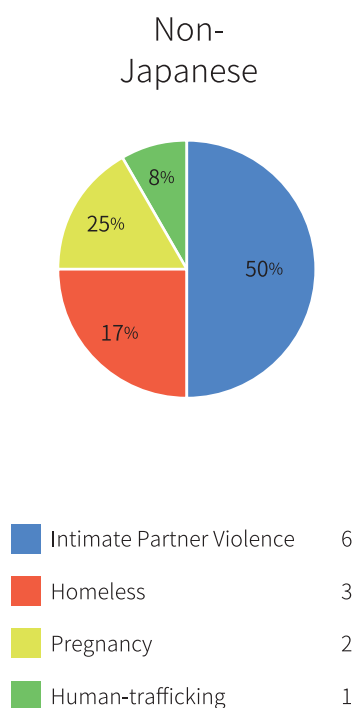
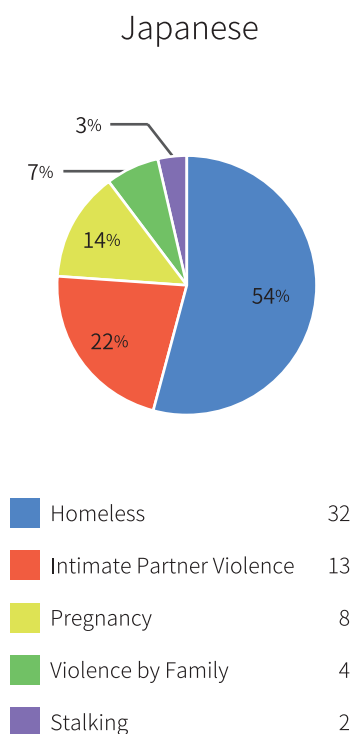
Of calls received from foreign nationals, there has been growth in consultations concerning those with resident statuses such as "family stay" and "study abroad" that are outside of the scope of public assistance.

Calls received from Japanese natives included consultations on domestic violence from a woman residing in a disaster-affected area in the Tohoku region as well as one concerning sexual violence injuries from a caller in the Chugoku region.

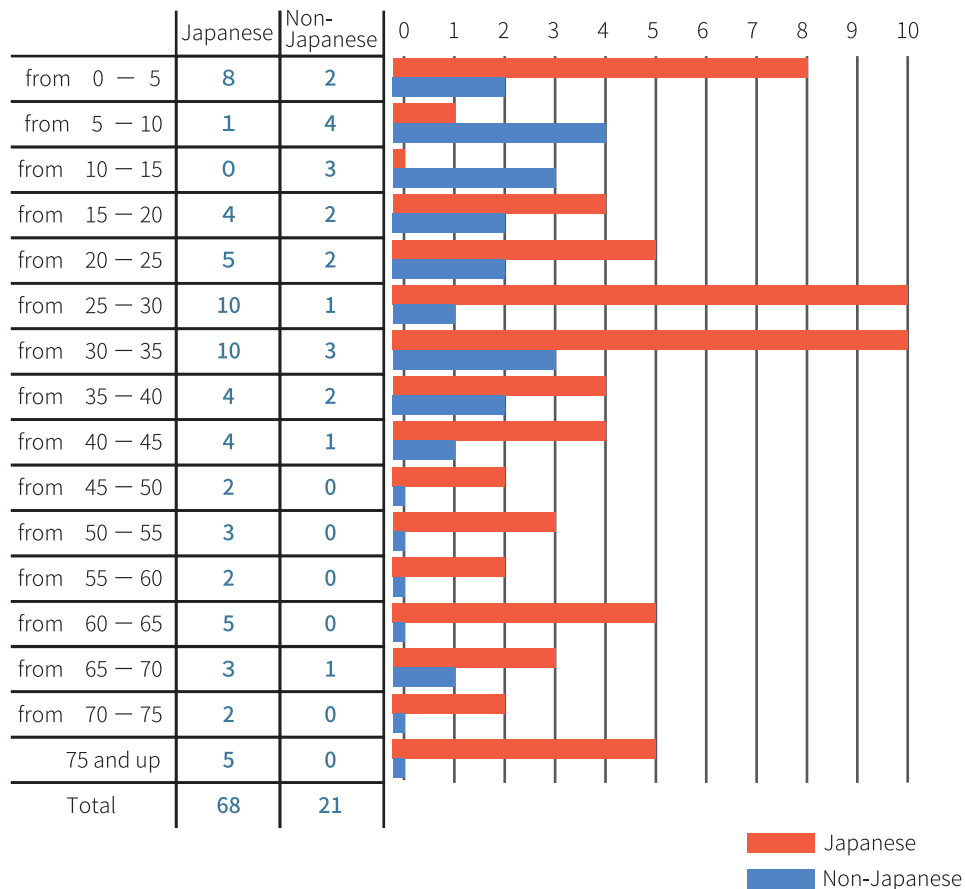
HELP Resident Statistical Report (April '14 ~ March'15)

Use Breakdown

April 1, 2014 - March 31, 2015



User Distribution by Age



HELP Resident Numbers by Nationality

(April 1, 2014 - March 31, 2015 Includes residents staying over from previous fiscal year)

HELP Resident Numbers by Nationality

Nationality	Women	Children
Japan	59	9
Philippines	4	7
Thailand	3	0
Egypt	1	2
Congo	1	0
Rwanda	1	0
Korea	1	0
Cameroon	1	0
Total	71	18

Women with Accompanying Children

Japanese 6 out of 59
Non-Japanese 5 out of 12

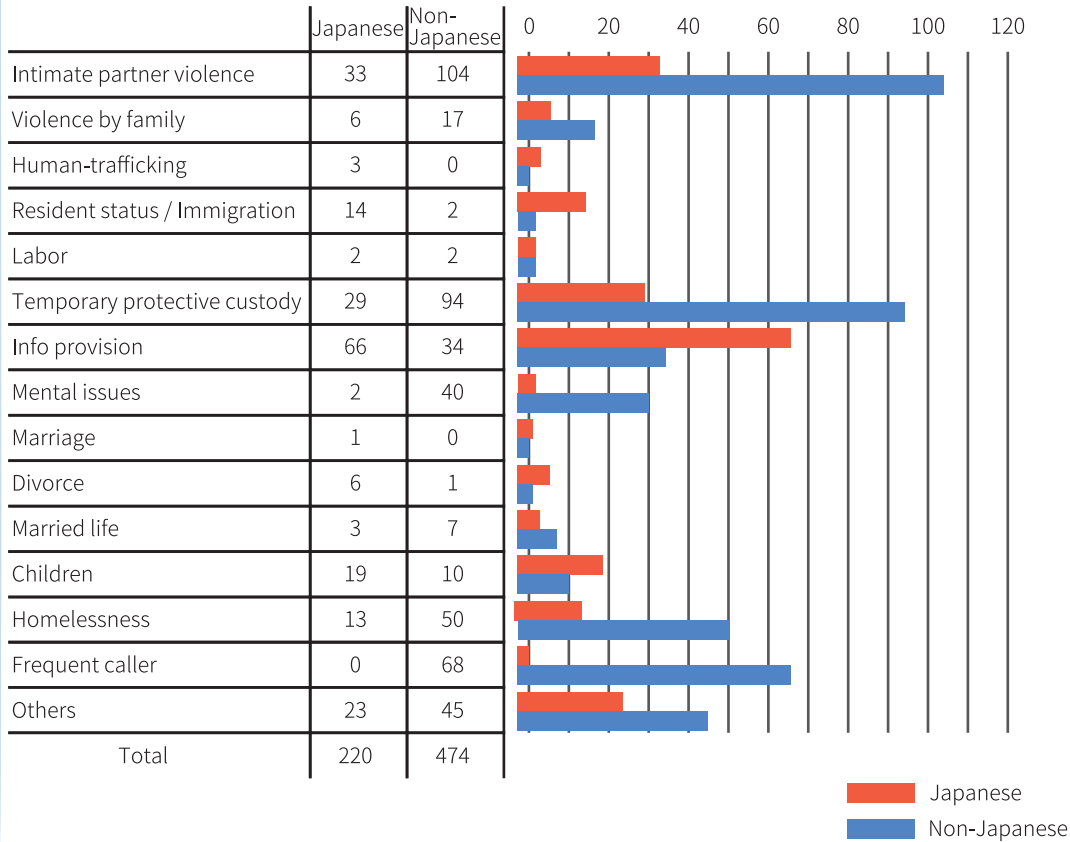
Non-Japanese Users by Prefecture

Location	Number
Tokyo	10
Saitama	1
Aichi	1
Total	12

Telephone Counseling Calls

Number by nationality

by topic



Nationality	Calls
Japan	474
Philippines	91
Thailand	35
China	15
USA	10
Indonesia	7
Myanmar (Burma)	7
Egypt	5
Colombia	5
Nigeria	4
Hong Kong	4
Russia	4
Germany	3
Cameroon	2
Korea	2
Congo	2
Sweden	2
Pakistan	2
Hungary	2
Brazil	2
Peru	2
United Kingdom	1
Iran	1
India	1
Ukraine	1
North Korea	1
Kenya	1
Taiwan	1
Unknown	7
Total	694

User Destination after Departure

Destination	Japanese	Non-Japanese
Facility	27	5
Apartment	3	3
Women's center	9	1
Home country	0	1
Home	7	1
Home of Friend or Acquaintance	2	0
Streets	0	0
Hospital	1	0
Live-in job	0	0
Unknown	5	1
Undecided	3	1
Others	2	0
Total	59	12

Avg. Stay by Non-Japanese Users (in days)

2010	31
2011	29
2012	25
2013	23
2014	38

Number of Nights by Nationality

Japanese	1418
Non-Japanese	801
Total	2219

The Government of Japan' s Policy on Human Trafficking

The “Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons” is the Government of Japan' s policy on human trafficking. It was developed in 2004, with reviews made in 2009 and 2014. As HELP has been deeply involved with trafficking issues since its inception in 1986, the Cabinet Office requested its participation in hearings for both the plan' s development and reviews.

In the early stages of HELP' s establishment, more than 100 victims of human trafficking were admitted each year; with HELP' s support, almost all returned to their home countries. In the latter part of the 1990s, trafficking victims began to express a desire to reside permanently in Japan; there was a noticeable increase in cases in which these same women later returned to the shelter due to domestic violence from their Japanese husbands. When fingerprints started being taken upon entry into Japan, trafficking victims began settling in Japan without repatriating. Currently, only an extremely small number of human trafficking victims request repatriation. There has once again been a rise in the number of cases such as those mentioned on the previous page and instances of young Japanese girls/women becoming victims. Moreover, cases of foreign interns who become trafficking victims through the Japanese government-sponsored Technical Intern Training Program have become well-known

internationally. (See Kyofukai' s “Fujin Shimpō,” Vol. 1351, April 2015. :

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201406230033

<http://www.ajwrc.org/english/sub/voice/20-1-3.pdf>)

In 2005, trafficking in persons was at last criminalized and perpetrators punished. A system was organized wherein police recognized both perpetrators and victims; victims were given protection at a women' s counseling center and repatriated with the support (medical and social reintegration support both for the return and after) of the IOM (International Organization for Migration). However, because this system only offers support for repatriation, there are few if any merits for victims who do not want to return to their home countries.

Even those women who choose to repatriate do not have it easy – they must repeat the same story time and time again for police and immigration officials; it takes time before they are recognized as victims. And depending on the circumstances of the perpetrator' s trial, the victim may have to spend some months unable to work or go about freely.

In recent years there have been a remarkably low number of victims recognized (2013: 17; 2014: 25). The government must be called upon to take the current system that emphasizes punishment of the perpetrator and move focus on development of a support structure that covers assistance for the long-term residency of the victim.

We must not forget the fundamental themes of trafficking in humans: awareness of the human rights of women and economic disparity.

HELP Receives the Kamenori Award!

Since its foundation, HELP Asian Women' s Shelter has accepted all women who need support regardless of nationality and continued to offer services such as assistance in mother languages and multilingual phone consultation. As of the end of FY2014, the number of foreign women and children who have utilized HELP reached 3,453. These efforts were recognized by the Kamenori Foundation, who presented HELP with the 2014 Kamenori Award. “For the human rights of women, mothers and their children, as an organization HELP has significantly contributed to the support of foreign national women and problem resolution.” It is our joy to report this honor to all of our supporters!



My Experience at HELP

My name is KAJ Ayukwend Herueuse. I am from the Democratic Republic of Congo and currently serve as a Global Mission Fellow (United Methodist Church) at Women's Shelter HELP, a Japanese emergency shelter. While serving here, I have become aware of how a smile can smooth communication with others despite language barriers. And I have learned that all people on earth are to be treated with respect and dignity, regardless of nationality, ethnicity and religion. Finally, it is not an exceptional person or an extraordinary effort that is essential to impacting or changing someone's life, but the small, simple things that we do with love, passion and unity. I have been constantly amazed at the level of respect, love and dignity with which HELP staff attend to and show concern for the shelter's residents; in this way, they comfort these survivors and promote their recovery, helping these women to face the next stage in their lives with a smile.

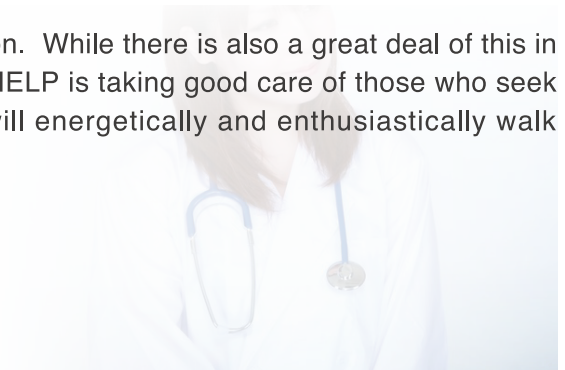
Hello. I am Hye-In LEE from South Korea. I am a Global Mission Fellow with the General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church. I have been serving at HELP since October 2014 as a young missionary. Through my time at HELP, I have learned a variety of ways to do many different things. I intend to deepen my learning with one more year of experience in this very significant work. I am very much looking forward to seeing how I have grown after completing this mission at HELP. I am thankful for being able to work here and use the skills I have for HELP. I am convinced that this is the way to show all of us, including me, how God works. I will do my utmost while here in Japan. I am grateful for all I am experiencing at HELP during my stay. Thank you very much.



A Nurse's Gaze Ms. YAMAMOTO Junko

I have been visiting HELP once a month since March 2014. I see women who are escaping violence, from young girls to older women. Sometimes they come with babies or toddlers; other times, there are those who are in the midst of medical treatment and those who are pregnant. Not only Japanese women come, but also women from other countries. I wondered how I would engage with them ... but it starts with listening – about health issues, worries and so on. I want to offer my help.

There is insomnia and stress that come from constant tension. While there is also a great deal of this in the general public, within this safe but set space, the staff at HELP is taking good care of those who seek shelter here. Entrusting these women to HELP's care, I will energetically and enthusiastically walk alongside them while praying for them.



Offer a HELPing Hand!

Volunteer

Women' s Shelter HELP monthly information meeting: 1:30 pm on the first Friday

To volunteer, please either call us or sign up on the Kyofukai homepage to attend this meeting.

<<Volunteer work mainly includes helping to pick up and clean our shelter and taking care of plants. >>

Donation of supplies

We thank you for your thoughtful donations!

Send to: HELP Office
 c/o KYOFUKAI – Japan Christian Women' s Organization
 Hyakunin-cho 2-23-5, Shinjuku-ku
 Tokyo 〒169-0073

Please indicate that mail deliveries be made Monday through Friday only.

- «Food Items» Condiments (sugar, salt, soy sauce, vegetable oil), jam, sweets, rice (rice coupons also welcome!) and drinks (coffee, black tea, cocoa, green tea, juice)
 * Please make sure items are within expiration dates.
- «Everyday Items» Shampoo, laundry powder/detergent, dish soap, disposable diapers, bottom wipes, tissues, face toner and lotion (small bottles), make-up.
- «Clothing» Adults and children: pajamas, sweat suits, socks, slippers, jackets
 Children: short-sleeved shirts, boys pants (ages 4 -10)
 Adults: Parkas, postpartum underwear, front-opening pajamas
 * We would be delighted to have new clothing.
- «Others» Strollers (new), sunglasses, shoes, sneakers, notebooks, light-weight blankets, bath and face towels (new), handicraft supplies (ex: needlework material, etc.)

Financial Contributions

- ¥2,000 → Enables one birthday party.
¥4,000 → Helps to update a foreign resident' s visa.
¥8,000 → Enables one aromatherapy class.

Postal Transfer Account

0 0 1 1 0 – 5 – 1 8 8 7 7 5

Account holder: 「女性の家 HELP」

OR

0 0 1 4 0 – 1 – 3 2 4 6 9

Account holder: KYOFUKAI, Japan Christian Women' s Organization

「財団法人 日本キリスト教婦人矯風



Editor' s Note

I' ve noticed the fresh air brought in by new faces at the start of the fiscal year. With this rejuvenated feeling, we headed out for our annual flower-viewing picnic. The cooking staff put their hearts into preparing homemade lunch boxes ... In no time at all there were excited shouts of “I already ate two!” “I ate three!” and then the lunches were gone! As the sunlight shone down on us, I listened to the small footsteps of toddlers running about and I prayed that the paths of those women who have left HELP are well protected. We at HELP ask for your continued gracious support. (H.S.)