

Asian Women's Shelter HELP

Network News

No.74

"I celebrate and shout because of my Lord God." Isaiah 61:10

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Where Have We Come from, Where Are We Going?

Residents at HELP come to stay here for a variety of reasons. (Please see next page.) Recently there has been a marked increase in pregnant and elderly women. During the brief time they are at HELP, in their own way they each ask themselves "Where have I come from and where am I going?"

Ms. A came to HELP with her four-year old child after leaving her non-Japanese husband. Though she had been severely abused by him she was barely conscious of it. She told a counselor that at the time she had had little mental or physical energy to spare, and she did not even notice that her own child was becoming violent. She stayed at HELP for about one month, and when it was time for her to move to another facility, she had reached a point that she was able to make her own decisions for their future.

Ms. B was in her late 20s. She had been abruptly fired from her live-in job and consequentially lost her place to stay. While at HELP, she worked hard every day to find work so that she could move to an apartment as quickly as possible. But it was difficult for Ms. B to find an appropriate job and she lost heart. In the end, she decided to move to other lodgings and put more time into her job search.

Ten-year old Girl C came to HELP along with her foreign-born mother. They had fled from her Japanese father's abusive treatment of her mother. After about two weeks the mother started to say that she wanted to go back to her husband. Girl C adamantly opposed this saying that he would kill her mother. It seemed that the mother and daughter would regularly discuss this until late into the night. After about one month her mother went back to her father while, to the surprise of all of the adults, Girl C insisted that she would not go home, but instead went by herself to a children's group home.

Ms. D was in her early 20s and a single mother who was released to HELP after giving birth to her second child. In her three weeks with us, she showed us her motherly side when her older child came to stay. Ms. D expressed a desire to return to her apartment, so all of the relevant organizations gathered to talk over how to support this request. A significant issue was how she would rebuild her life with her children. With a great deal of support, Ms. D moved back to her apartment. No matter how many agency officials use their ingenuity and build support programs, only Ms. D can put those programs into action.

More than a few women come to HELP due to intimate partner violence and then later return to their husband or partner. Ms. E, a foreign national, entered our facility with her three children because of abuse by her Japanese husband. Between savings from her public assistance money and support from government agencies, the four of them were able to return to her home country in two months. A few months later, she returned to her husband. They had been in contact through Facebook and he had covered return expenses.

We have learned that the road that each person walks and the path by which they escape is prepared for them in ways we cannot imagine. HELP is also being asked where it is going and what its role is as a public shelter during a time of significant change. Our business report states that "The spirit of HELP has not changed since its inception - to support women and children who live in legal gaps." We at HELP are confident that our path from here has been prepared.

Hiroko Ueda
HELP Director

An Overview of the Beneficiaries of HELP in FY2013

～ Increased Homelessness of Non-Japanese & A Baby Boom ～

In FY2013, the beneficiaries of HELP included 19 women of foreign nationalities, 47 Japanese women and 14 accompanying children for a total of 80, adding up to 1,876 nights (92.3% of previous fiscal year). In the first half of the year we ran a training project and from August we enhanced our program to support the mind and body, which included music therapy, flower arrangement, herbal therapy and aromatherapy.

HELP staff accompanies residents to medical facilities in order to ensure the safety of female victims of domestic violence and provide support for non-Japanese in their native languages. In FY2013, those accompanied rose to 35% of all residents (123.2% over previous fiscal year) but made up only 33% of non-Japanese residents (51.1% from FY2012).

<Non-Japanese Female>

Approximately half of the 19 women of foreign nationality were accompanied by children. There were 11 accompanying children close to half of whom were ages 10 and above, though all age levels reside at the shelter. In looking at reasons for seeking shelter, a significant change from previous years was noted; a large portion of those non-Japanese sheltered had no dwelling place (30.0%), making it the number two reason. The settlement of non-Japanese women is progressing, and appears to reflect a growing similarity in consultation topics with that of Japanese nationals.

Intimate partner violence was the number one reason for seeking shelter (46.7%); and when combined with violence by family members (16.7%), brought the total of those non-Japanese taking refuge due to domestic violence to over 60%. In contrast, victims of human trafficking and pregnancy were both at low rates of 3.3%.

The average stay for all non-Japanese was 23.39 days, which is the lowest average total in five years. However, in actuality, this is the average of extremes – those who stay only a few days and those whose stay is extended due to such reasons as being wait-listed for a facility opening.

● DV victims: In FY2013, we saw a number of families in which it became clear that there was a difference in how “a life with violence” was recognized by mothers versus children after they had taken refuge. While some mothers hoped to return to the husbands that had beaten them, some school-age children (primary school) clearly stated their resolve not to return. In some cases this resulted in mothers and children going their separate ways after they left HELP. It’s not that they have a bad relationship; but rather that the mother who does not have the skills to create a harmonious relationship is confronted by a child who is tired of supporting her and has said, “No more.”

Besides this, we also sheltered numerous women who said, “I always thought that because I’m a foreigner I wouldn’t be helped.” In some instances, in spite of being proficient in Japanese, regional governments still took a negative attitude toward these women; other women thought “Everyone in the city hall is Japanese so of course they will take my (Japanese) husband’s side.” And in another case, a woman moved with her children from friend to friend over almost two years until her access for consultation. The effect of a perpetrator’s threat concerning a non-Japanese woman’s nationality and/or legal status is powerful; these examples once again show just how great an obstacle there is to non-Japanese receiving appropriate support.

● Human trafficking victims: In FY2013, a trafficking survivor staying with HELP was extremely busy with daily interviews by a related organization. Despite this, the character of this woman who poured out her love to children at our shelter was such that she overcame language barriers and gained everyone’s trust. Due to



circumstances, however, before we were able to see her through to the completion of her support, we had to send her off with our hope for her a speedy return to her home country were realized.

● **Homeless:** Of those women we received in FY2013, there were those who during their stay at HELP made and executed plan after plan to go out, they exercised regularly to become fit and took other actions, exemplifying independence and vitality. Additionally, there was a teenager whose mother repeatedly moved internationally, so she was constantly interpreting. After leaving HELP, she found “her place” and friends through junior high night classes. Seeing this teenager’s smile made us feel the significance of the effect that healthy development and educational opportunity has on children.

● **Aftercare:** Through the cooperation of other organizations, fun activities continued in FY2013 – we had a cherry blossom-viewing party and celebrated other seasonal festivities, participated in dessert and bread-making classes under the instruction of top-class hotel chefs, and received tickets to Disneyland. Services such as legal support and assistance with resident status are continued for former residents.

<Japanese Nationals Female>

Forty-seven women were Japanese nationals, three of whom were accompanied by children. Reasons for seeking sanctuary at HELP included, as with previous years, homelessness, making up the largest number at 52.0%, and intimate-partner violence at 22.0%. FY2013 was characterized by violence at the hand of family members (12.0%) being surpassed by the high number of those seeking shelter due to pregnancy (14.0%), making it number three in reasons.

The average length of stay increased by almost 10 days from the previous fiscal year to 24.42 days. In many cases, stays were prolonged for both older women and the numerous pregnant women accepted in FY2013 due to such issues as acceptance to facilities they were to move into after leaving HELP as well as availability of support after a child is born.

Not too long after one of these pregnant mothers had consulted with government agencies about her intentions to be a single parent, the child’s father and she suddenly started to talk about marriage and building a new life together after the baby was born. HELP’s staff was delighted because in the shelter’s long history this was indeed a rare event.

However, we have also seen the case of a woman who, until just before the baby’s birth, suffered through repeated run-ins with public agencies in which they were unable to come to a decision concerning support for her child after the baby’s birth. The fact that this created a situation in which she was unable to move to an appropriate facility despite the proximity of her due date is obviously undesirable from the perspective of ensuring a safe delivery. We believe that we must work toward making improvements in this area in the future.

In another instance, a woman who should have received public assistance lost a place to go due to the harsh judgment of public agencies. We call for the appropriate application of the law.

<Telephone Counseling>

Twenty-eight countries including Japan were represented in the FY2013 telephone consultations, which added up to 658 calls. A significant decrease in the total number of consultation calls is attributed to a decline in the number of HELP staff and our inability to respond to Thai language calls since last year.

Of foreign language calls received, consultations related to Philippine nationals dominated as in previous years. However, compared to typical years in which the number captured more than half the total, it remained at 40% for FY2013. Foreign language calls covered personal consultation concerning domestic violence, divorce, resident status and workplace harassment; calls from child guidance centers and city halls requesting support are also included in this figure.

Calls received from Japanese natives included a divorced woman who had not received support as a victim of domestic violence and a request for an introduction to a lawyer who understood Catholic teachings. There were some situations that we felt callers were looking for someone that recognized the need for religious support in the healing process of domestic violence survivors.



HELP Resident Statistical Report (April '12 ~ March'13)

Residents by Nationality

Nationality	Women	Children
Philippines	7	4
Colombia	3	2
Taiwan	2	3
China	2	2
Rwanda	2	0
Thailand	1	0
Korea	1	0
Malaysia	1	0
Subtotal	19	11
Japan	47	3
Total	66	14

Number of Adults with Children

Japanese	3 out of 47
Non-Japanese	9 out of 19

Foreign Users by Prefecture

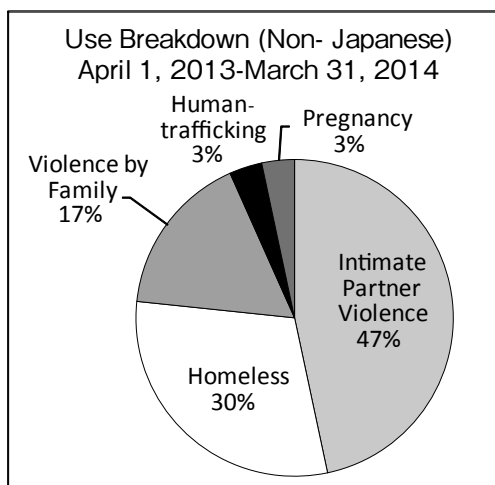
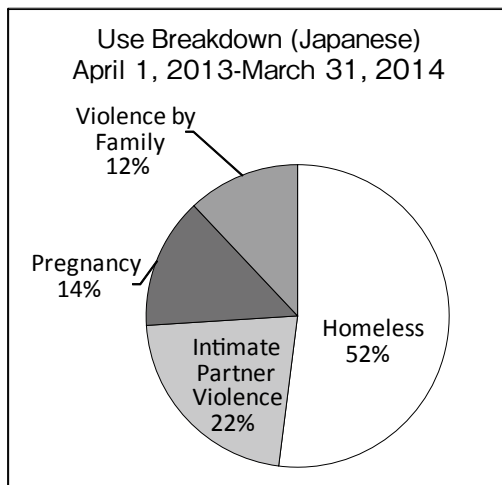
Location	Number
Tokyo	14
Aichi	2
Nagano	1
Yamanashi	1
Gunma	1
Total	19

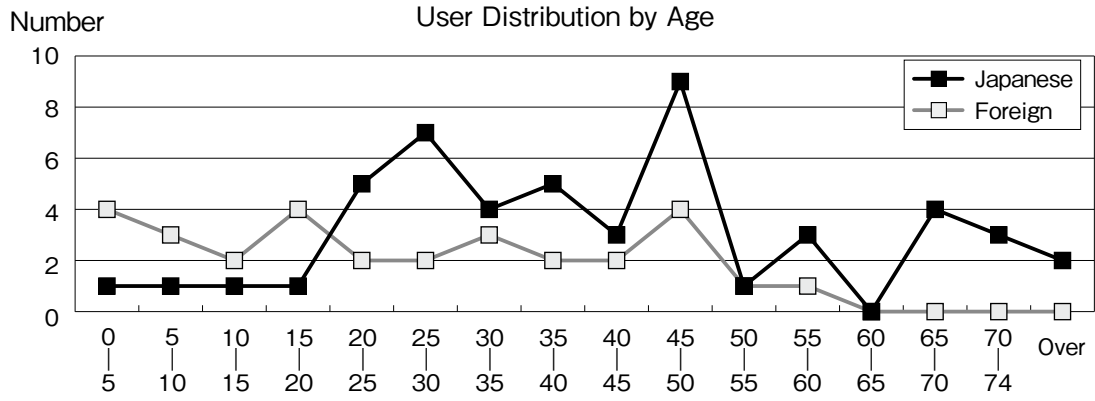
User Destination after Departure

Destination	Japanese	Non-Japanese
Facility	24	8
Apartment	4	0
Women's center	2	4
Home country	0	0
Home	5	1
Home of Friend or Acquaintance	1	0
Streets	0	0
Hospital	1	0
Live-in job	0	0
Unknown	8	3
Undecided	1	1
Others	1	2
Total	47	19

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

2009	37.85
2010	31.06
2011	28.93
2012	25.00
2013	23.39

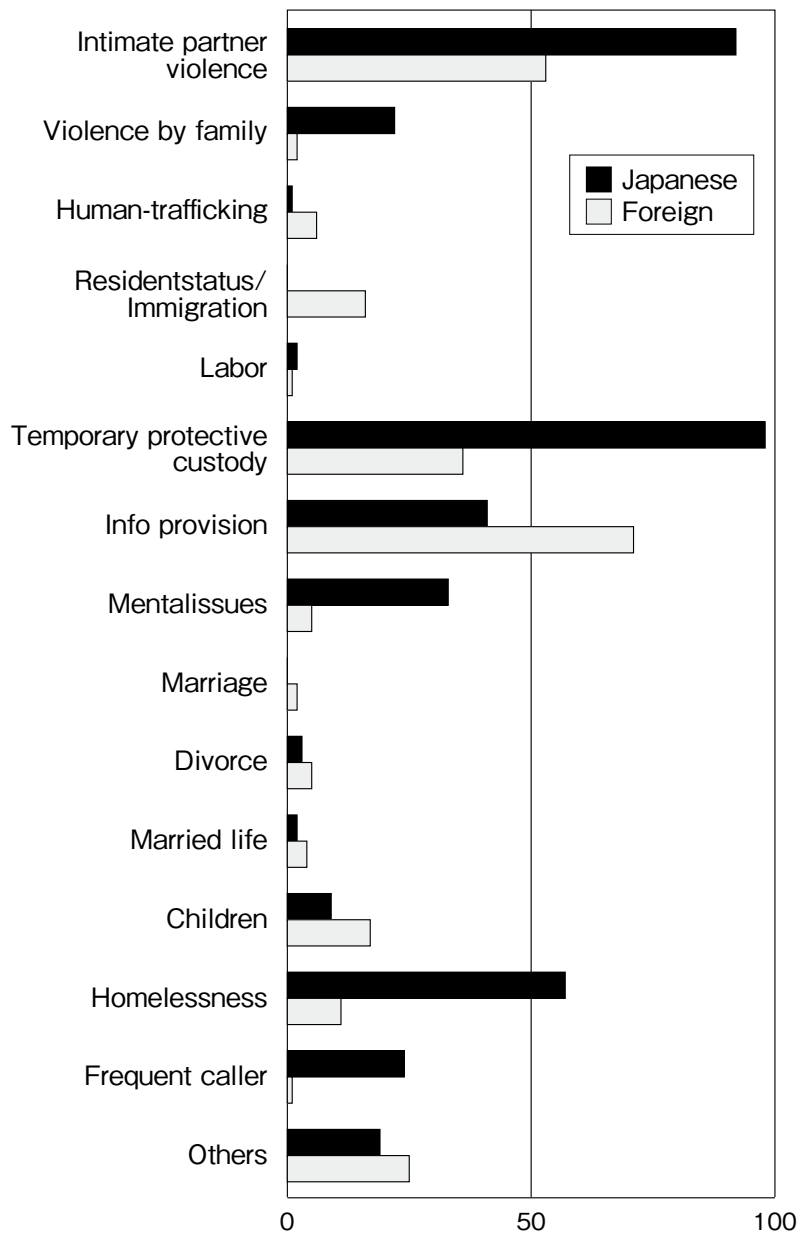




Telephone Counseling Calls
(number by nationality)

Nationality	Calls
Japan	403
Philippines	104
Thailand	26
China	21
Colombia	9
Malaysia	9
United Kingdom	7
USA	6
Russia	6
Peru	5
Myanmar (Burma)	5
Korea	4
Taiwan	4
Ruwanda	4
Nepal	3
Japan (naturalized, etc)	3
Poland	2
Bolivia	2
South Africa	2
Nigeria	2
Iran	2
Hungary	2
Singapore	2
Slovakia	2
Canada	1
Spain	1
Viet Nam	1
India	1
Unknown	19
Total	658

Telephone Counseling Calls (by topic)



Seasonal Attire for Celebrations

There are various milestones in life that we celebrate by wearing special attire. But, what happens when that “special moment” comes while someone is in a shelter? Does she have to give up and let the event pass by without being celebrated?

As an extension of our regular provision of clothing, we would like to offer two examples of our efforts to provide clothing appropriate for celebrating a special event as a truly “special” event.

“Commemorative Photos—The beginning of a mother and child’s new life”

“My girl had clothing for the ‘Seven-Five-Three Festival (Shichi-go-san)’ that she had received from relatives...” murmured one mother quietly. Her daughter was just the age for this festival. She mentioned this on the train one day when advertisements for the festival were everywhere.

I was certain this mother would regret it if she wasn’t able to celebrate her daughter’s Shichi-go-san. And so I wondered if they could at least have a commemorative photograph taken. After consulting with the mother, we resolved to take the photo and make a reservation at a photography studio. But as well as studios being completely booked due to the timing, we were further challenged in our search by a timeline that limited us to that period that the mother and daughter were residing at HELP.

Finally, the day of the photo shoot arrived! HELP staff sent off the mother, daughter and me with the full ensemble— a suit found in the nick of time, a purse borrowed from a staff member, in addition to make-up and other necessities. I’m so grateful to our HELP staff.

With heads held high, we headed off to the photo studio. Quite unexpectedly, the studio provided a kimono for the mother and helped dress her free of charge. The daughter’s eyes lit up when she saw the dress and kimono; her mother smiled happily. (I followed along the entire time as if I were a close relative.) Of course, the daughter looked very cute, but the mother’s dignified appearance made my day. Her determination stood out clearly in the photographs. (Y.T.)

“A Brand New First Grader” (School Entrance Ceremony)

It was already into March when a foreign-born mother and her children who had suffered

from domestic violence entered the shelter. The oldest child would enter first grade from April (the start of Japan’s school year). This child was very much looking forward to starting primary school. Preparations were proceeding along steadily based on a support policy of “moving residents in time for entrance ceremonies.” Somehow we managed to move her and her family by March 20th. “Now we have to get them some clothes for the entrance ceremony,” noted one staff member.

Children’s clothing is a difficult one. Either something fits or doesn’t depending on the child’s gender, age and build. As we sat worrying about finding something appropriate, a staff member hollered from the clothing warehouse, “Got it! How about this?”

“Oh! That’s great!” We immediately called the child in to try on the clothes. They fit perfectly! With this success, we plowed forward. “OK. Next, let’s look for shoes.” And with that a shoe box was opened and a pair of formal shoes was pulled out. These were also just right. “Oooh! How cute,” cooed the staff as they admired the slightly bashful child. It’s absolutely at a time like this that we are extremely grateful for having clothing and shoes at the ready... and for those who kindly send them to us.

“All right. Mother is next.” The zealous staffer then embarks on finding an outfit for the mother. The suit, blouse and shoes were assembled one by one; the remaining purse and necklace were later bought by the mother at a nicely timed bazaar. And with that, a “brand new first grader’s mother” was assembled.

“I never imagined this would be possible. Thank you,” said the mother as she and her children left HELP. Our staff members were filled with the joy of being involved in this “joint venture.”

We have since heard that the “brand new first grader” is enjoying going to school. (H.S.)

From the Night Guard



Being a night guard means spending evenings together with the residents—sharing a meal, playing with the children, enjoying each other's company while watching TV. Within the shelter, residents pass time eating a delicious meal, in deep concentration as they knit, enthusiastically watching TV with others or in other personal ways.

Although it may seem that these women have no worries, you can hear their fears and concerns as they speak. Each resident is dealing with a variety of thoughts – a loved pet that had to be left behind, family, life after leaving HELP. A significant role of the night guard is to listen silently and carefully

to what the resident says when she chooses to talk about these thoughts.

Protecting the safety of residents is another aspect of the night guard's role. Some residents are in extreme danger while others have health concerns, so we must respond when an emergency arises. Great care is also taken to prevent infectious diseases such as influenza and norovirus.

While serving a vital role that bares great responsibility, time spent playing with the children and speaking with residents is the most enjoyable part of the job. It's important to me that everyone at HELP is able to spend a relaxed evening and night.

(Tazawa Mutsumi)



From the Dining Table of HELP



Six months has passed since I joined HELP and I've finally grown used to my commute and job. It's my first time to commute an hour and a half by train and for a while I was exhausted just from the trip; but now I manage all right.

Cooking also was a chore in the beginning: When faced with making five dishes for each lunch and dinner without any real idea what to cook, I ended up dwelling on the menu from the day before and then became depressed.

But, when we ate lunch together it was encouraging to see that the residents happily ate the food I had prepared and even said that it was delicious. I've since developed the confidence to say, "Hey, I'll try this other

recipe next time." I can also now think up a menu that meets the health needs and the tastes of the residents for that particular day, in addition to planning meals that everyone can enjoy even when there are food restrictions for religious reasons.

This achievement is thanks to the caring ways of the staff I work with and the encouragement of the residents, for which I am very grateful.

I hope that as one of the recipes that I've learned, this will benefit HELP, which offers socially meaningful activities, and be a delight for those who try it out.

I will do my best in the future to provide even more delightful dishes.

(N.T.)

Stir-fried Cellophane Noodles

The key here is reconstituting the noodles so that they are slightly firm. This dish is also delicious when it is lightly flavored with only the juices from the meat and vegetables.

To serve 4:

1 clove of garlic	1 bag beansprouts
Small amount of ginger	1 bunch of Chinese chives
100g ground pork	1 inch of carrot
50g of cellophane noodles	2 tsp. sesame oil
Salt, pepper and soy sauce	

- ① Chop up garlic and ginger.
- ② Thinly slice carrot and Chinese chives into sections 3cm in length.
- ③ Soak cellophane noodles in hot water for one minute. Remove and cool under cold water. Cut into easily eaten lengths.
- ④ Add sesame oil to fry pan. Stir-fry ① and ground pork. Next, stir-fry ② and bean sprouts.
- ⑤ Flavor with ½ teaspoon of salt and a little pepper. Then add ③ and stir-fry. Season with 1 teaspoon of soy sauce.

♪ **For those interested in the work of HELP** ♪

HELP holds an activity information meeting at 1:30 pm on the first Friday of the month (¥500 for materials). Time is provided to consider together HELP's activities as well as the issues that can be seen through these activities. We ask that you attend this information meeting if you are interested in volunteering. Please call us before your visit. (Note that the shelter is not available for viewing.)

♪ **We are looking for volunteers!** ♪

- 1 Help with cooking, picking up, cleaning and other activities.
- 2 Handicraft classes (sewing, knitting, etc.) If you have skills in this area, please lend a hand!
- 3 Play, study with and read to our children!
- 4 Garden once or twice a month (take care of plants, pull weeds, etc.)

**With thanks for your generosity &
a request for future support**

The entire staff at HELP thank you for your thoughtful donations!

We kindly ask for your support in collecting currently needed items.

Our office is closed over the weekend, so when mailing items please request Monday–Friday delivery times.

Send to:

〒 169-0073

HELP Office

c/o KYOFUKAI – Japan Christian Women's Organization

Hyakunin-cho 2-23-5, Shinjuku-ku Tokyo

« **Food Items** » Condiments (salt, soy sauce, vegetable oil, dressing, jam), sugar, sweets, rice (rice coupons also welcome!), and drinks (coffee, black tea, cocoa, green tea, barley tea, juice)

* Please make sure items are within expiration dates.

« **Everyday Items** » Shampoo, laundry powder/detergent, dish soap, diapers, bottom wipes, toilet paper, tissues, face toner and lotion (small bottles),

make-up.

* We have sufficient quantities of conditioner.

« **Clothing** » Adults and children: pajamas, sweat suits, socks, room shoes, jackets

Children: short-sleeved shirts, boys pants (ages 4-10), undergarments and clothing for babies

Adults: Parkas, postpartum underwear, front-opening pajamas

* We would be delighted to have new clothing. HELP has a significant amount of used clothing and so is not requesting it at this time.

« **Others** » Strollers (new), sunglasses, shoes, sneakers, notebooks, light-weight blankets, bath and face towels (new), handicraft supplies (ex: needlework material and thread, knitting yarn), alarm clocks, clean books and CDs (various genres)

♪ **Please support HELP** ♪

HELP is largely supported by contributions from the public and the hard work of volunteers. We kindly ask for your generous support and cooperation.

Postal Transfer Account

001100 – 5 – 188775

Account holder: 「女性の家 HELP」

OR

00140 – 1 – 32469

Account holder: KYOFUKAI, Japan Christian Women's Organization

「財団法人 日本キリスト教婦人矯風会」

Editor's Note

Even if we do say so ourselves, we are proud of our delicious meals at HELP. However, to tell the truth, our breakfast menu is rather monotonous. Just the other day our staff remarked, "Long-term residents are having trouble dealing with this." There followed a heated discussion in the office (perhaps a frequent occurrence in living facilities?) about at least adding cheese to the menu. The next day, a certain staff member said quietly, "Yesterday my head was filled with cheese! Yes, cheese is important, but we shouldn't forget the 'objective' to which we aspire." May this fiscal year also be one in which, with a fresh start, we stay focused on our support of women dealing with challenging issues. (H.S.)