

Network News

Scripture

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.

Isaiah 43:2-3

"Tadaima!" (I'm home!)

A day-shift member of the support staff opens the front door. "Okaerinasai!" (Welcome home!)

A non-Japanese mother and her child step in saying "Tadaima!" Both mother and child spoke no Japanese when they first came to HELP Asian Women's Shelter. As an emergency shelter that works with the welfare office in receiving women who have suffered domestic violence from their husband or other family member, utmost attention is paid at all times to pursuits by perpetrators. Even when the doorbell rings, the door is never opened right away. Images from multiple security cameras installed in the premises are checked closely. Tension fills the air.

"Okaerinasai!" The staff member stands in the open doorway with a smile like a fresh breeze on her face. "Tadaima! Onaka ga suite! (I'm hungry!)" Children are quick to learn essential Japanese phrases in a short period of time.

They throw away their masks, disinfect their hands and fingers, and so on and so forth. There are many things to do before entering the facility. "Please refrain from nonessential and non-urgent outings, and cooperate in preventing the spreading of COVID-19." The staff explains this repeatedly to all residents in their respective languages. Notices posted in the facility are written not only in Japanese and English, but also in Asian, African and European languages that are the native languages of the residents. Even so, it is extremely difficult to make the understanding sink in that COVID-19 is infectious, and that it poses the risk of being transmitted from people to people.

Furthermore, the criteria for determining "nonessential and non-urgent" vary among people. Something that a bystander might consider trivial enough to be placed on the back burner may be extremely important and urgent to the person concerned. Be it differences in culture, religion, environment or personality, it is alright for everyone to be

different. However, under a state of emergency, such differences sometimes become rather difficult to accept.

At HELP, COVID-19 prevention measures have made daily living more difficult than ever before. An example is the way children now spend their time. Previously, staff members used to take the children to the park or to children's recreation centers while taking careful precautions against the risk of being pursued, so the children could run around as much as they wish in a spacious park, or have the opportunity to play with other children the same age as them. However, this has become difficult. Children must now spend their time within the shelter, but how? Women at the shelter are facing the same problem. Community-based Japanese language classes have temporarily closed. They can no longer take the train and go shopping accompanied by a staff member the way they used to as a means to improve their social skills. Creating goods and selling them are not allowed in temporary emergency shelter facilities. As such, it is taking more time than usual for many residents to prepare for their next step and move forward. There are usually residents who enjoy watching videos or reading books, but the way they spend their time necessarily changes as their length of stay extends over several weeks or several months.

Making maximum use of subsidies and grants, we are offering various programs that include music therapy, art therapy, flower arrangement lessons, yoga classes, and Japanese language lessons via Zoom and other online means. These programs embody the staff members' wishes that "everybody spends as many days as possible with a smile on their faces."

"Okaerinasai!" "Tadaima!" We are praying for the day we can hear such greetings being exchanged naturally among all residents and staff at HELP.

Hiroko Matsui (HELP Asian Women's Shelter Director)



Overview of HELP Beneficiaries in 2020

Women Aiming to Build a New Life for Themselves by Gradually Accepting Their Sense of Loss and Need to Heal

In 2020, HELP provided shelter to 68 people, including 14 women of non-Japanese nationalities, 47 women of Japanese nationality and 7 accompanying children. These residents stayed at HELP for a cumulative total of 2,497 nights (118.9% compared to last year). While the total number of residents decreased by 15 compared to 2019, their total length of stay increased, with many residents tending to stay for longer periods of time than previous residents. Music therapy (four times a month) and flower arrangement classes were offered as in usual years, but a variety of other therapy programs were offered in the latter half of the year, including art and yoga therapy programs organized with funding from the Cabinet Office (see p. 6).

To ensure the safety of residents who are victims of domestic violence, HELP staff accompanied residents to medical facilities at a rate of 16.1% among all residents (compared to 35.9% last year) and 53.57% among non-Japanese residents (compared to 92.9% last year). In either case, accompanied visits to medical facilities decreased significantly compared to last year, possibly owing in part to everyone's efforts to avoid close contact with others as much as possible amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, the fact remains unchanged that there are many residents who need assistance in the form of accompaniment, including language assistance.

<Non-Japanese Women>

14 women of non-Japanese nationalities stayed at HELP in 2020, including 2 women who brought their children. The two children were of preschool age. These women sought shelter at HELP mainly due to domestic violence or homelessness (37.5% each), followed by violence by a family member or human trafficking (6.3% each), and other reasons (12.5%). Other reasons included abandonment by a common-law husband.

Non-Japanese residents as a whole stayed at HELP for an average of 76.75 days, which was more than a month longer than last year's average of 46.46 days and the longest ever in the past five years. This was related to the state of emergency that was issued against COVID-19 a multiple number of times from the beginning of the year. The situation caused many women to have to wait to transfer to a medium to long-term facility due to restrictions placed on the number of people such facilities could accept amid the pandemic, or to have to postpone their return to their country until safe travel resumes.

- DV victims: Among victims of domestic violence who were introduced to HELP in 2020, several women were unable to bring their children with them, for various reasons. They all shared the same conflict in utilizing Japan's system for addressing their problem, since it would take much more time than it would in their home countries. Even so, there were women who gradually found hope by interacting with other non-Japanese residents, and women who tenaciously aspired to achieve their wish through repeated consultations with the staff at HELP, for example. There was a sense of powerfulness in their determination to overcome their crisis situation each in their own way.
- Homeless women: In 2020, HELP provided shelter to a woman who lost her stable personal relationships and a place to live both at the same time, and a woman who finally consulted with a welfare office and found temporary refuge at HELP, among others. There was also a woman who was able to get herself in shape both physically and mentally during her stay at HELP and actively sought to find a next place of belonging by herself.
- Victims of human trafficking: While waiting for the application for recognition of victim status to be processed, online Japanese language lessons were hosted by a relevant organization as future employment support.
- Care for residents and former residents: In 2020, indoor events (Halloween costume party, etc.) were organized for residents at HELP, and outings were made to parks, an aquarium, and other such venues within Tokyo.



<Japanese Women>

47 women of Japanese nationality stayed at HELP in 2020, including 3 who brought their children with them. Some 51.9%—corresponding to more than half—of these women sought shelter due to homelessness. The rest sought shelter due to domestic violence from an intimate partner (25.0%), violence by a family member (15.6%), pregnancy (3.8%), and other reasons (3.8%). While the ratio of women seeking shelter from domestic violence from an intimate partner (intimate partner violence; IPV) decreased from last year, a large 40% of the women and children who came to HELP in 2020 were victims of violence in the broad sense of the term when also combining violence by a family member. This was approximately the same ratio as last year. On the other hand, a decrease was seen in the ratio of pregnant women.

Women who sought shelter from IPV in 2020 included several elderly women. One woman went on to seek a next place of belonging by getting into contact with her adult children and friends while paying strict attention to safety, and another woman was able to find a nursing home at an early stage. There was also a woman and child waiting to go to their next facility while participating in various therapy programs at HELP.

Homeless women who came to HELP in 2020 were of various ages and backgrounds and spent their time at HELP in various ways. They included a young woman who realized it is okay to express her feelings for the first time in her life; a sexual minority “woman” who came to HELP on a recommendation but made a quick decision to leave early because she did not feel comfortable; a woman who wished to live independently as soon as possible but was struggling to come to terms with a chronic illness that is accompanied by seizures; and a woman who was taking the time to build relationships of trust with relevant people so she could be reunited with her child. Impressively, all of these women were seen taking steady steps toward their desired future, be it by making quick decisions or persisting efforts.

Japanese residents stayed at HELP for an average of 24.4 days, which was three days longer than last year’s average (21.3 days). The average length of stay thus remained at more than three weeks.

<Telephone Consultation>

In 2020, HELP received 883 telephone calls requesting consultation (121.9% compared to last year) from people from 29 countries including Japan (27 countries last year). The subjects of consultation from in and outside of Japan were wide-ranging, and included consultations regarding domestic violence and about how to apply for the government’s special cash payment. There was also a call from a person claiming to be forced to accept disadvantageous working conditions under a fixed-term employment contract, and a person who returned to Japan temporarily upon losing a family member to COVID-19 but became unable to go back home due to travel restrictions.

In addition to the above, calls were also received from nearby local governments (consultation desks), foreign support organizations, and foreign embassies. For example, there were inquiries regarding support for foreign students and former foreign students with residence statuses that do not qualify for welfare but who require help due to being pregnant or having had a baby, being a victim of domestic violence, or being hard put to making a living. There were also inquiries about providing a place to live to foreign technical intern trainees who are scheduled to change their workplace. Such consultations regarding foreign nationals seeking shelter amid tight living conditions are diversifying in terms of their nationalities and languages. At the same time, there were calls particularly during the beginning of the fiscal year that indicated the struggles of newly employed consultants in local government offices to provide consultation support, due to new employee training programs being canceled and social resources failing to function as usual on account of the pandemic situation.

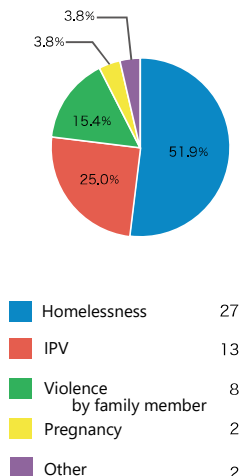
As with last year, a large proportion of telephone consultations from Japanese callers continued to be about the hardships of living after having suffered DV or sexual abuse. This year, however, there was a succession of new consultations from nearby local governments regarding requests for temporary protective care of DV victims and other people in need of help. In light of the occupancy at HELP, however, some requests had to be regretfully declined.

Statistical tables for 2020

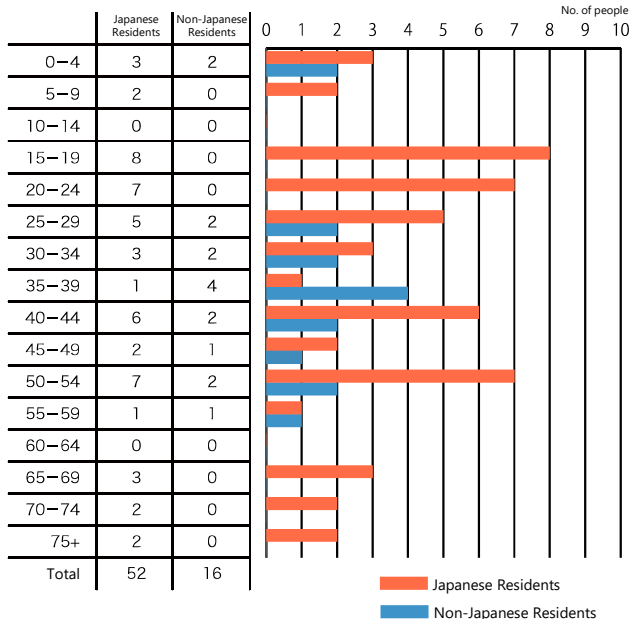
Reasons for Seeking Shelter

(April 1, 2020 - March 31, 2021)

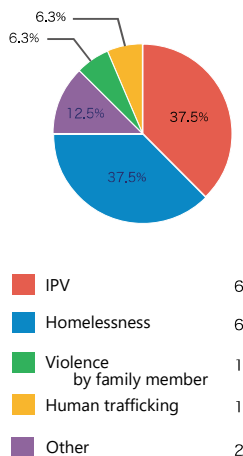
[Japanese Residents]



Age Distribution of Residents



[Non-Japanese Residents]



Number of Residents at HELP by Nationality

(April 1, 2020 - March 31, 2021)

※ Including residents whose stay extended into the next fiscal year

Number of Residents at HELP by Nationality

Nationality	Women	Accompanying Children
Philippines	3	0
China	2	1
Indonesia	1	0
South Korea	1	0
Taiwan	1	0
Peru	1	0
Brazil	1	0
USA	1	0
Congo	1	1
Nigeria	1	0
South Africa	1	0
Subtotal	14	2
Japan	47	5
Total	61	7

Breakdown of Non-Japanese Residents by Region

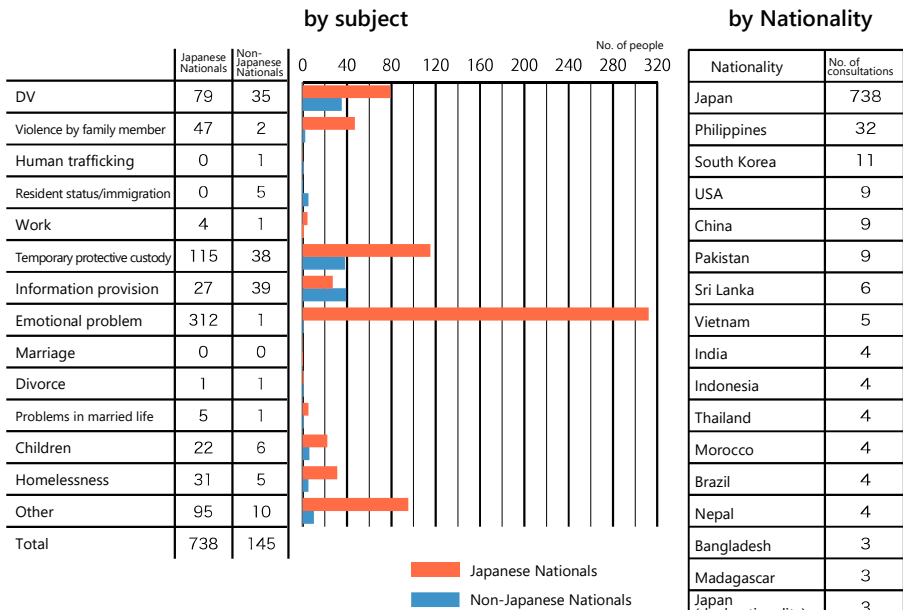
Region	No. of residents
Tokyo	9
Kanagawa	2
Saitama	2
Ibaraki	1
Mie	1
Osaka	1
Total	16

14 Non-Japanese residents women of which
2 were accompanied by children

47 Japanese residents women of which
3 were accompanied by children



Number of Telephone Consultations (by nationality)



Destination of Residents after Leaving HELP

Destination	Japanese Residents	Non-Japanese Residents
Welfare home	33	5
Apartment	4	1
Women's center	6	3
Home country	0	2
Home	2	0
Home of friend or acquaintance	2	0
Streets	0	0
Hospital	0	1
Live-in employment	0	0
Unknown	1	2
Undecided	2	2
Other	2	0
Total	52	16

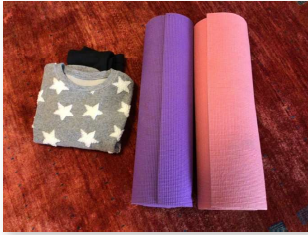
Avg. Length of Stay by Non-Japanese Residents

2016	40.14 days
2017	16.38 days
2018	50.03 days
2019	46.46 days
2020	76.75 days

Total Length of Stay by Nationality

Japanese Residents	1269
Non-Japanese Residents	1228
Total	2497

We Have Launched Cabinet Office Funded Programs



Yoga therapy

Last August, our application for the government grant for strengthening and supporting safety net programs for victims of spousal violence was approved, and despite the impacts of COVID-19, we have been pursuing various initiatives through trials and errors with heed to proper infection measures.

To build staff capacities for better assistance, we organized a professional training program with remote supervision by a professional (clinical psychologist, lawyer, psychiatrist) once a month. As a result, our staff have been able to deepen their understanding of the background of each resident. We also provided weekly yoga and art therapy programs to care for residents' physical and emotional well-being. Yoga not only

loosens the body, but it also has the effect of providing psychological relaxation. Art therapy consists of various techniques such as mess painting and collage, allowing participants to freely use paper, fabric, clay, and diverse other materials as they wish. In addition to providing a means of expressing emotions without using words, it has become a source of recreation to many participants. These programs have renewed our awareness of the importance of translation assistance to non-Japanese residents particularly in the legal and medical areas, and the importance of Japanese language classes as a foothold for living and working in local communities after leaving HELP.

To continue these programs, we have applied for the grant again this year. We plan to strengthen our aftercare initiatives so residents who leave HELP can come back to receive counseling about any emotional and daily living concerns they may have. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought into sharp relief diverse problems beginning with the hardships of living. We intend to continue moving forward to providing the necessary support in response to women's diverse needs.



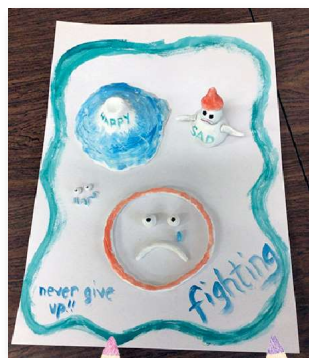
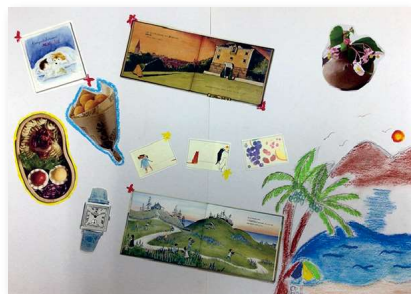
Participation in a CAP Program



From November 6, 2020, I participated in a three-day program titled "The Basics of Preventing Child Assault" held in Saitama City (hosted by NPO CAP Center JAPAN). In our interactions with mothers and children who come to HELP under difficult circumstances, I have always addressed each situation while agonizing over what I ought to do and what kinds of words I should offer. However, I feel I have gained an answer from this program.

That is, I realized that my primary mission is to firmly bear in mind the right that is entitled to all children as advocated by CAP—the right to be "safe, strong and free"—and to make sure that we neighbors protect this right. Some things that may not be visible to mothers from a close distance may sometimes be visible to neighbors from a short distance. Children always look at their mother's faces. This is because their mother means the world to them. A mother's laughter puts a smile on children's faces. However, in unstable situations, it is not easy even for a mother to always keep thoughts of her child in mind. I am convinced that it is my duty to put smiles back on the faces of mothers and children within their life at HELP, even if only little by little.

I also realized anew the importance of children learning how to protect themselves from various assaults and the importance of the active involvement of nearby adults on children's future lives, and was taught the importance of having the courage to speak out about what we notice.



● ● ● Works produced in art therapy ● ● ●

Other Grant Organizations

We wish to take this occasion to announce, with profound gratitude, the goodwill we have received from various organizations. In addition to the "FY2020 Tokyo Metropolitan subsidy for emergency temporary shelter services for foreign nationals" and the "grant for strengthening and supporting safety net programs for victims of spousal violence," we have received and applied the following funds for their intended purposes: The Mitsubishi Foundation & Central Community Chest of Japan (support for activities to assist people of foreign heritage 2,570,000 yen), Wesley Foundation (outing program expenses 37,003 yen); Love and Grace Welfare Aid Foundation (expenses for COVID-19 disinfection, etc. 500,000 yen); and Gushinkai Foundation (expenses for flower arrangement activities 111,844 yen). In support of daily life at HELP, we also received expenses from ILBS to cover the cost of repairing rain leaks, expenses from United Church of Canada to cover the cost of exchanging tatami mats, and foods, sundry goods and clothes from UBS Securities. We have furthermore received money and goods donations from various other organizations. Thank you all very much.

HELP Women's Shelter Needs Your Support!

• • • • Maintenance Donations • • • •

We are experiencing a time when our future remains uncertain, but we hope everyone is safe and well. Precisely at a time like this, we are filled with a gratitude that runs deeper than ever to be able to continue our activities to lend a hand to women and children in need of help with your generous support.

Last year, HELP provided shelter to 68 women and children from Japan, the Philippines, Indonesia, China, South Korea, Taiwan, USA, Brazil, Peru, Nigeria, Congo and South Africa, and received telephone consultations regarding women from 29 countries around the world. We staff at HELP intend to further our efforts to support women and children who have found their way to our shelter to escape from abuse and violence by parents or family members or to find relief from their painful past and difficult present.

In order for us to fulfill our mission under our financial situation, however, we ask for your generous support in the form of maintenance donations.

July 2021

KYOFUKAI – Japan Christian Women's Organization

Mizuho Iida, Chair of the Board of Trustees

Hiroko Matsui, Executive Director and HELP Asian Women's Shelter Director



Please send your donation to :

Post Office Account : 00110 - 5 - 188775

Account Name : 女性の家 HELP (Josei no ie HELP)



• • • • Goods Donations • • • •

At HELP, we pass on items of daily necessity to our residents, not only to bring a measure of basic comfort to their daily lives, but to also deliver a moment of healing to women and children who have made it to our shelter after having left behind their familiar surroundings, personal relationships and much of their precious belongings so they may get the rest they need and eventually nurture hope and the will to begin a new life. We will use your generosity to respond to the diverse needs of each of our residents in accordance with their age, nationality, culture, etc. and kindly ask for your cooperation as we continue our efforts.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are currently accepting only new, unused items.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

<Foods>

Condiments (sugar, salt, soy sauce, vegetable oil), jam, snacks, drinks (coffee, tea, cocoa, green tea, juice, creamer) **Items that have not passed their expiry dates*

<Sundry goods>

Shampoo, laundry detergent, kitchen detergent, tissue paper, skin lotion, milky lotion, cosmetics, hand cream

<Clothing>

For adults: Pajamas, sweat suits, socks, jackets, hooded sweatshirts, undergarments (short and long sleeved) **Children's clothing are not accepted at present*

<Other>

Folding umbrellas, shoes, notebooks, cotton blankets, bath towels and face towels, Quo Cards (prepaid card), gift certificates, etc.



Please send goods donation to :

KYOFUKAI

2-23-5 Hyakunincho, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 169-0073

Please specify your delivery to be made between Monday and Friday.