

Scripture

"and when a prayer or plea is made by anyone among your people Israel-being aware of their afflictions and pains, and spreading out their hands toward this temple-then hear from heaven, your dwelling place. Forgive, and deal with everyone according to all they do, since you know their hearts (for you alone know the human heart),"

2 Chronicles 6 : 29-30

A Home with No "Musts"

A member of the staff here at HELP Asian Women's Shelter noted that she has learned many things since engaging in support activities at HELP. To the question, "What kinds of things, for example?" she responded by saying, "I do not hear the word 'must' being spoken here. The staff never say to the residents that they 'must' observe the curfew or 'must' tidy their rooms."

Staff members frequently make it known that curfew is five-thirty, and they may be heard saying "How nice and refreshing to relax in a tidy room!" but in no instance do they use imperative words when speaking with residents of the shelter. Personally, I cannot help but think of the countless number of times I have said "Do this" or "Don't do this" while raising my children and even while working.

At HELP, everyone has a wide degree of individual freedom in going about their daily activities. Instead of all residents sitting down for meals at the same time, each resident takes a seat at a desired time between specified hours and takes desired portions from large platters of dishes laid out on the dining table. They may take a bath anytime between nine in the morning and nine at night on any day of the week, so some residents enjoy taking a shower in the morning, while others make a habit of soaking in the bath before going to sleep. The residents of HELP who come seeking temporary emergency shelter are diverse, ranging from women of non-Japanese nationalities, young women in their teens, elderly women, women accompanied by their children, women on welfare and those not on welfare. They may differ in their language, culture and lifestyle, but they share a difficult or painful experience as victims of domestic violence, women with no place to belong, or women who face other personal problems.

HELP can provide shelter for up to twelve people in a total of eight rooms. Five of these rooms are for women who come alone and three are for mothers with children. Residents may stay at the shelter for two weeks, as a rule, but not a few who require time to prepare for their next step after leaving HELP stay for a few months. For

the safety of DV victims and other reasons, the location of the shelter remains undisclosed. Therefore, residents cannot go to work, and their accompanying children cannot go to a nursery or school, to say the least. They must spend day after day under the same roof, eating the same meals and sharing the same living space as other residents at HELP.

Being able to act freely on one's own will and choice instead of being forced to do something by someone else is what makes people human. It could be said that the human atmosphere at HELP is created by the absence of imperative words in daily life and the wide freedom of choice that residents are given. A relaxed and comfortable time passes at the shelter. Yet, the curfew is kept, and the shelter is kept clean and tidy. Why is this?

.....
I had been writing the above when news of the coronavirus pandemic came in. Everyone was urged everyone to wear a mask, wash hands, and thoroughly sanitize all surfaces. Soon thereafter, a state of emergency was issued, discouraging people from making nonessential and nonurgent outings and prohibiting gatherings of people particularly in confined spaces, crowded places and close-contact settings. As HELP is a shelter where people are gathered to live together as a group, various measures have been devised by the staff so it could continue to be a place where residents can feel safe and secure. They disinfect door knobs and handrails as part of their daily duties, scramble to procure masks and sanitizers, translate and convey the content of the state of emergency to non-Japanese residents, and so on. It has also become necessary to change HELP's characteristic buffet-style meals, where residents were able to take their own desired servings of dishes.

I pray for the day we will put an end to this lifestyle filled with "don'ts" and "must nots" and return to our normal lives.

Hiroko Matsui (HELP Asian Women's Shelter Director)





Overview of HELP Beneficiaries in 2019

Non-Japanese Women and Children Victims of Violence and Japanese Women Recuperating Their Mind and Body

In 2019, HELP provided shelter to 83 people, including 10 women of non-Japanese nationalities, 61 women of Japanese nationality and 12 women accompanied by their children. These residents stayed at HELP for a cumulative total of 2,099 nights (103.8% compared to the previous year). This figure saw a slight increase from the previous year, as there were 31 more residents in 2019 than 2018. Music therapy was once again offered (four times a month) through the year.

To ensure the safety of residents who are victims of domestic violence, HELP staff accompanied 35.9% of all residents to a medical facility, corresponding to a larger percentage than last year (31.6%). With respect to non-Japanese residents, a much higher 92.9% needed to be accompanied to a medical facility, mostly due to their requiring language assistance.

<Non-Japanese Women>

10 women of non-Japanese nationalities stayed at HELP in 2019, including 3 women who each brought their child. The 3 children were all preschoolers under the age of 6.

The top reason for these women seeking shelter at HELP was domestic violence (53.8%), followed by homelessness (38.5%) and other reasons (7.7%). Other reasons included violence from an employer.

Non-Japanese residents as a whole stayed at HELP for an average of 46.46 days. This was a few days shorter than the average of 50.03 days in 2018, but there continued to be a tendency toward prolonged stays mostly among women who were waiting for an opening at a medium to long-term facility and women who had no choice but to postpone their return to their country due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Also as a ramification of COVID-19, HELP has been taking extra precautions when complying with requests for shelter from regions where the coronavirus situation is less severe compared to the vicinity of HELP, to protect the safety of those seeking shelter.

- DV victims: Among the DV victims who were introduced to HELP in 2019, there were a number of women who had just come to Japan and therefore had hardly any interaction with Japanese people and could speak no Japanese. These women acquired basic conversation skills by attending Japanese language lessons in the facility and gradually gained confidence by using Japanese in their daily living. They also deepened their understanding of daily customs in Japan by learning about them from staff members who speak their native language. To women with slightly difficult children, the staff took care to provide an environment where they could play safely under the watchful eyes of their mothers. The sight of these mothers showering their children with love and looking after them with patience through their stay until they are accepted in an alternate facility with a better environment has left a strong impression on the staff at HELP.
- Pregnant women: In 2019, HELP provided shelter to a women who was in her last month of pregnancy for a short period until arrangements were made so she could return to her country.
- Homeless women: In 2019, HELP provided shelter to a number of homeless women who were deprived of a place to reside due to violence from their employers and other such causes and women who have lost their homes due to a loss of income caused by a reduction in work. These women included those who wished to return to their countries.
- Care for residents and former residents: In 2019, indoor events were organized for HELP residents (Halloween costume party, etc.), and outings were made to the circus in autumn and to view the cherry blossoms in spring.



<Japanese Women>

61 women of Japanese nationality stayed at HELP in 2019, including 6 who brought their children. As their reasons for seeking shelter, 52.9% and more than half gave homelessness as their reason. This was followed by domestic violence (intimate partner violence; IPV) at 31.4%, violence by a family member at 8.6%, pregnancy at 4.3% and other reasons at 2.9%. In 2019, the ratio of women staying at HELP due to DV (IPV) largely increased compared to the previous year, but the ratios of homeless women and women who have fled from violence by a family member saw a decrease.

It is particularly worthy of mention that a woman in her 90s received shelter at HELP in 2019. HELP can only provide shelter to women who do not require physical assistance, but she satisfied this requirement and became the oldest resident ever to reside at HELP. She received devoted care also from relevant institutions and was able to transfer to her next accommodation.

Among the victims of DV (IPV) who resided at HELP in 2019, mothers with children transferred to their next accommodation in a relatively short period of time in most cases. In the case of women who came to HELP alone, there was a woman who needed to spend an ample amount of time at HELP engaging in leisure activities such as embroidery and handicrafts to regain enough energy to proceed to the next step in her life.

The homeless women who came to HELP in 2019 all differed in age, their reasons for seeking shelter, and the way they spent their time at HELP. However, many of them were seen trying to look forward as much as they could even amid their difficult situation. For example, there was a young woman who made devoted efforts to make her child happy despite the emotional wound that she carried from an ordeal she heretofore went through. There was also a woman who rejoiced at her fateful encounter with a same-age woman facing a similar circumstance as her for the first time in her life, and an elderly woman who took care to maintain her own physical and mental conditions and somehow managed to transfer to a facility of her choice.

Japanese residents stayed at HELP for an average of about 21.3 days. While there were a certain number of women who were simply waiting for an opening at their next accommodation and moved out within a week, many stayed for longer than three weeks, as was the situation last year (24.1 days).

<Telephone Consultation>

In 2019, HELP received 724 telephone consultations (116.0% compared to last year) from people from 27 countries including Japan (17 countries last year). These calls, which were made from nearby Kanto-area prefectures as well from other regions of Japan and even from overseas, varied widely. They included a consultation about a mother and child who fled to their home country after suffering DV but wished to return to Japan, a consultation about whether or not to move back to one's home country on occasion of a child entering primary school, and consultations about having suddenly been evicted and being at a complete loss of what to do. Some of the calls were made by men who were pressed to find a place to stay or men seeking support to keep them from committing violence on their wives.

In addition to the above, calls were received from nearby local governments (consultation desks), international exchange associations, foreign support organizations and other such organizations, with regard to the provision of support to families where child abuse or domestic violence has occurred. HELP provided the necessary information as well as counseling to the callers in each of these cases. Calls were also received from people of increasingly diverse nationalities and languages seeking shelter to escape from dire living conditions.

Telephone consultations from Japanese callers showed roughly the same trend as last year, with many grieving about the hardships of living after having suffered DV or sexual abuse. Among them, there were calls from women in need of immediate help living in regions of Japan other than the Kanto region. These calls are indicative of an increasing need for telephone counseling services that transcend the constraint of physical distance. Additionally, there were a significant number of calls from nearby local governments requesting temporary protective care of women who are working to stand on their own but have become unable to continue their stay at their previous accommodation. There apparently appears to be a growing need to augment HELP's support framework to respond to such calls.

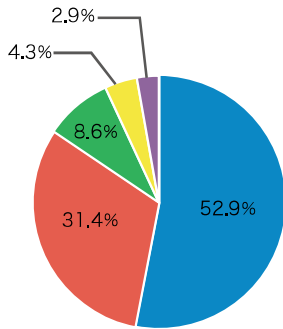


Statistical tables for 2019

Reasons for Seeking Shelter

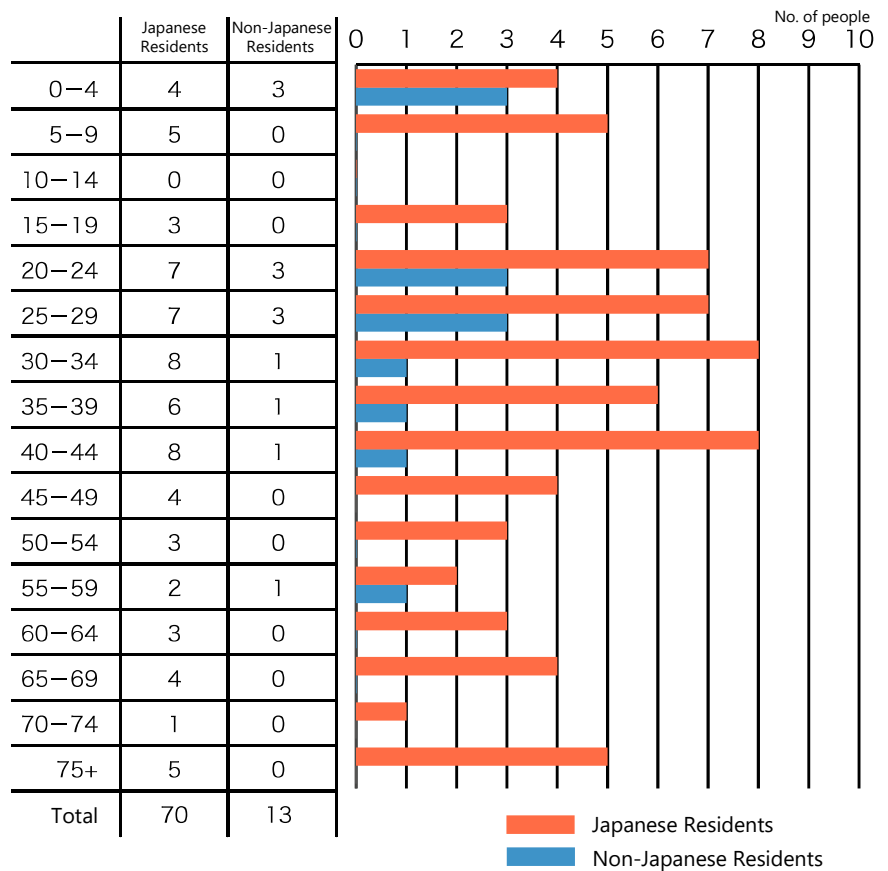
(April 1, 2019 - March 31, 2020)

Japanese Residents



Homelessness	37
IPV	22
Violence by family member	6
Pregnancy	3
Other	2

Age Distribution of Residents

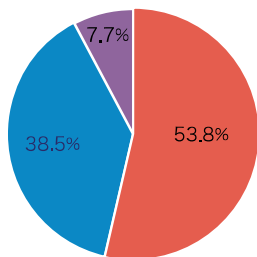


Number of HELP Residents by Nationality

(April 1, 2019 - March 31, 2020)

※ Including residents whose stay extended over the year-end

Non-Japanese Residents



IPV	7
Homelessness	5
Other	1

Number of HELP Residents by Nationality

Nationality	Women	Accompanying Children
Philippines	5	1
Indonesia	1	1
Zimbabwe	1	0
China	1	0
Congo	1	1
Peru	1	0
Subtotal	10	3
Japan	61	9
Total	71	12

10 Non-Japanese residents women of which 3 were accompanied by children

61 Japanese residents women of which 6 were accompanied by children

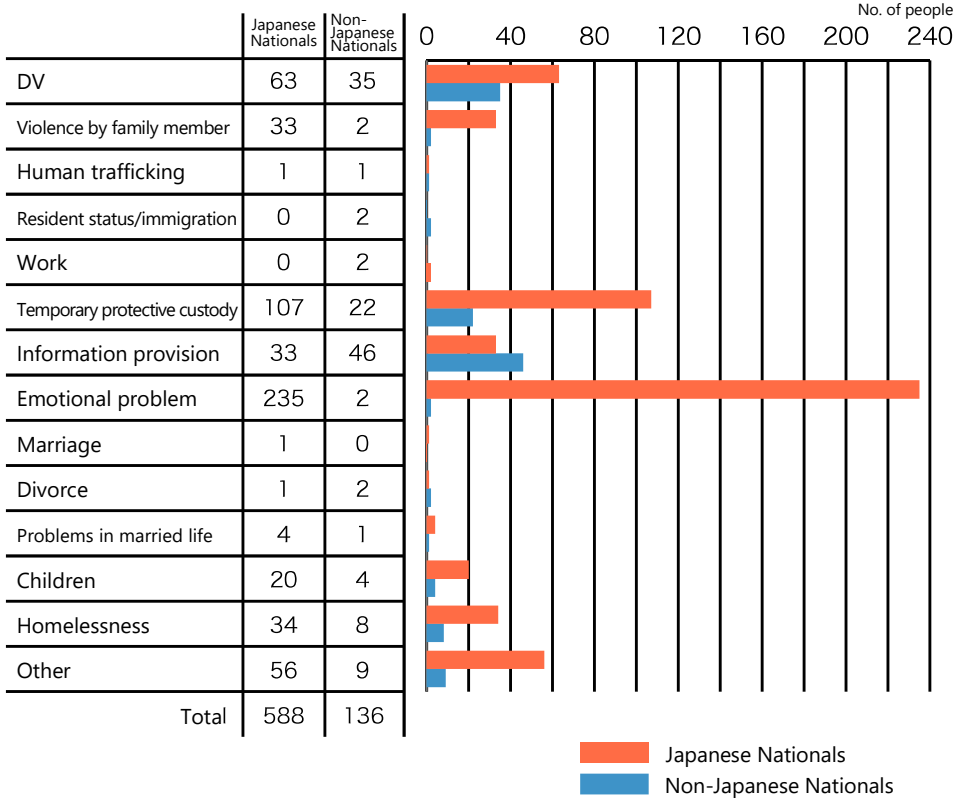
Breakdown of Non-Japanese Residents by Region

Region	No. of residents
Tokyo	9
Saitama	2
Ibaraki	2
Total	13



Number of Telephone Consultations

by subject



by Nationality

Nationality	No. of consultations
Japan	588
Philippines	30
Indonesia	12
Peru	10
Thailand	7
Iran	7
Pakistan	7
USA	7
Vietnam	6
Mongolia	6
Zimbabwe	4
Bangladesh	4
Switzerland	3
India	3
Sri Lanka	3
China	3
Nigeria	3
Italy	2
Germany	2
Russia	2
Kenya	1
Tanzania	1
Congo	1
Nepal	1
Bulgaria	1
Lithuania	1
Unknown	9
Total	724

Destination of Residents after Leaving HELP

Destination	Japanese Residents	Non-Japanese Residents
Welfare home	42	4
Apartment	6	0
Women's center	7	2
Home country	0	3
Home	3	0
Home of friend or acquaintance	0	0
Streets	1	1
Hospital	3	0
Live-in employment	0	0
Unknown	0	0
Undecided	4	3
Other	4	0
Total	70	13

Avg. Length of Stay by Non-Japanese Residents

2015	27.14 days
2016	40.14 days
2017	16.38 days
2018	50.03 days
2019	46.46 days

Total Length of Stay by Nationality

Japanese Residents	1,495
Non-Japanese Residents	604
Total	2,099

HELP Women's Shelter Needs Your Support!

• • • • • Maintenance Donations • • • • •

Today's difficult circumstances may not allow us to fully appreciate the beautiful flowers of the season, but we hope everyone is spending their days in good health and spirits. Especially in times like this, our gratitude for being able to continue our activities to lend a hand to women and children in need of help with your generous support runs deeper than ever.

Last year, HELP provided shelter to 83 women and children from Japan, the Philippines, Indonesia, Zimbabwe, China and Congo and received telephone consultations regarding women from 27 countries around the world. To provide heartfelt support to such women and children who seek shelter at HELP to escape from abuse and violence by parents or family members or to find relief from their painful past and difficult present, we staff at HELP are determined to redouble our efforts.

However, our financial situation is not necessarily comfortable. We therefore seek your generous support in the form of maintenance donations, so that we may fulfill HELP's mission.

July 2020

KYOFUKAI – Japan Christian Women's Organization

Mizuho Iida, Women's Welfare Committee Chairperson

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.

<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 (medium-sized bottles), milky lotion (medium-sized bottles), cosmetics, hand cream

<Clothing>

For adults and children: Pajamas, sweat suits, socks, slippers, jackets

For adults: Hooded sweatshirts, underclothing (short and long sleeved) (new items)

<Other>

Baby strollers (new), folding umbrellas, shoes, notebooks, cotton blankets, bath towels and face towels (new), handicraft supplies, 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.