

Scripture

This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile

Romans 3:22

"May I visit you today?"

Amid a succession of phone calls for consultation that HELP Asian Women's Shelter receives, a call is received from a former resident.

"May I visit you today?" The caller says she has no work today. She left HELP just a year ago and transferred to a homeless support center. Depending on whether there are residents who will be newly moving into the shelter or leaving the shelter on that day, the staff may reply, "Yes, certainly. Come on over in the afternoon!" or she may ask, "Is there perhaps another day that you could visit us?"

Some former residents talk with the staff at HELP about the worries or happy moments they experienced after leaving the shelter. Others simply come to reminisce, recalling how delicious the meals were, for example. There were women who said they could not forget the tasty snacks and treats they enjoyed at HELP, and how warm and sweet the cook's hand-made French toast used to be! There was a woman who recalled the savory salt-grilled mackerel she used to like and yearned to eat an authentic meal of one soup and four dishes again at HELP. Another woman of foreign nationality said she missed the halal meals she used to relish at HELP. It appears the cooks' thoughts and feelings have gotten across to the residents.

The women and children who arrive at HELP accompanied by a social worker from the local government office come with little more than the clothes on their backs to escape from hardship, be it domestic violence, loss of a place to stay, or other predicaments. As an emergency shelter, HELP can only offer short-term residency for up to two weeks, as a general rule. Yet, it is a place that residents miss and feel they want to visit again. It is a place that makes them want to see the staff whom they know will always lend an ear. It is a place that makes them want to bring their children and show how they have grown.

Some women come alone, while others come in groups of two or three with people who have spent the same time at HELP. Once, a child who could not yet walk and had been eating baby food when leaving the shelter came tagging along on its own feet. "Okaerinasai (welcome back)! My, how you've grown!" the staff exclaimed in unison at the front door, just like a grandmother awaiting her grandchild at home. "COVID-19 had just begun to spread when you were here," they noted, but a year or even six months make a large difference to a child. Another time, a foreign child accompanied by its mother was heard singing a Japanese nursery song while walking down the hallway. It was a song the mother learned in a Japanese lesson she received when she used to reside at HELP. She probably still sings the song to her child as a lullaby.

Based on the awareness that seamless support is essential, the Tokyo Metropolitan grant for strengthening and supporting safety net programs for victims of spousal violence, which began three years ago, is now also being applied to aftercare support. Yoga and art therapy programs are now open to all interested visitors on the day they are held, with hopes of also providing an opportunity for former residents to refine their social skills. Whether it is to listen to worries about a child's education, offer advice on seeking a job, or lend an ear to housing concerns or concerns about human relationships, the staff at HELP all understand their residents well.

Former residents of HELP are encouraged and comforted knowing that they are welcome to call HELP's consultation number whenever they need help, and they may visit anytime by calling in advance.

In April 2024, a new law to support women in difficulty will come into force. The financial situation at HELP continues to be tight, but there is no doubt that HELP has a highly significant and legitimate reason for existing.

Hiroko Matsui (HELP Asian Women's Shelter Director)



Overview of HELP Beneficiaries in 2022

Women Spending Their Daily Lives Moving Slowly Toward Recovery without Mentioning the Abuse or Violence They Experienced in the Past

In 2022, HELP provided shelter to 72 people, including 11 women of non-Japanese nationalities, 49 women of Japanese nationality, and 12 accompanying children. They stayed at HELP for a cumulative total of 1,896 nights (127.6% compared to last year). The total number of residents increased by one from 2021. Total length of stay also increased from 2021, when it fell considerably due to COVID-19, and returned to around the same level as before the pandemic. Continuing from the previous year, a variety of therapy programs were offered, and Japanese language lessons for women of non-Japanese nationalities were held at the shelter throughout the year. The therapy programs included music therapy (four times/month), flower arrangement classes, and art and yoga programs organized with funding from the Cabinet Office Grant for Strengthening and Supporting Safety Net Programs (see pp. 6-7).



To ensure the safety of resident victims of domestic violence, HELP staff accompanied residents to medical facilities at a rate of 4.3% (8.1% last year) among all residents and 1.3% (50.0% last year) among non-Japanese residents. The rate for non-Japanese residents has dropped significantly. However, when including accompaniments to all relevant institutions, it stood at roughly the same rate as last year. While residents who require accompaniment have diversified, the need for assistance in the form of accompaniment and language support to non-Japanese residents remains unchanged.

<Non-Japanese Women>

A total of 11 women of non-Japanese nationalities stayed at HELP in 2022, including 6 women who brought their children with them. There were 10 children in all, including several children of school age.

Domestic violence (81.0%) was the topmost reason these women came to HELP, followed by violence by a family member (19.0%). In 2022, there were no women who sought shelter for reasons of homelessness or human trafficking. Non-Japanese residents as a whole stayed at HELP for an average of 41.95 days. This was more than two weeks longer than last year's average of 17.92 days. One of the reasons was that medium to long-term facilities had been hard put to accept new people in 2022.

DV victims: HELP received a relatively large number of women victims of domestic violence in 2022. Among women who stayed at HELP for a prolonged period, there was a woman who bestowed an overflowing amount of love on her child and was a source of solace to other residents, a woman who continued to attend the Japanese language class held in the shelter and studied hard, women who befriended residents from other countries and enjoyed learning each other's languages, and a woman who attached priority importance to her religious prayers, among others. At the same time, there was also a woman who had a stable residency status but could not establish a strong relationship with the other residents which deepened her isolation, and a child who would cry up a storm with each "sayonara" to a friendly face leaving the shelter.

There was also a woman who was highly proficient in Japanese owing to her prolonged stay in Japan over many years and was able to find the next place to stay rather quickly in line with the local government's support policies.

Violence by a family member: In 2022, HELP received a family that was under the care of more than one relevant organization. They maintained a good relationship with other residents by communicating in multiple languages, but through repeated consultations with their organizations, the family relatively quickly transferred to their next place as planned. As the violence had a large impact on the children who are unable to express their feelings in words, HELP staff sent word to the organizations regarding the need for them to receive continual care.

Care for residents and former residents: During 2022, a small-group Christmas party was held on four separate occasions, and the various programs offered at HELP were open to spontaneous visits. Support was also provided in the form of telephone consultations.



<Japanese Women>

A total of 49 women of Japanese nationality stayed at HELP in 2022, including 2 who brought their children with them. A large 70.6%, or roughly three-fourths, of these women sought shelter due to homelessness, followed by 15.7% domestic violence (violence from their husband or intimate partner), 11.8% violence from a family member, and 2.0% other reasons. They stayed at HELP for an average of 19.90 days. This marked a year-on-year decline for the second consecutive year, from 24.4 days in 2020 and 21.54 days in 2021, and fell below three weeks.

Women who sought shelter at HELP due to homelessness in 2022 were of various ages and backgrounds. However, many were young women who lost a place to stay after becoming on bad terms with their parents and family and came to HELP via the support of a supporting organization or welfare office. A number of these young women were pregnant. They were sociable but had no one to confide in about important matters, and ultimately sought a place to prepare for an abortion in their second trimester. At HELP, they made “friends” with other residents in a similar situation and shared the same place and time participating in programs they enjoyed. Even after transferring to a medium to long-term facility, these women continue to visit HELP from time to time. There were also several elderly women who had lost their homes for some reason despite possessing considerable assets. The way in which they maintained their physical and mental health conditions and calmly awaited the opportunity to transfer to a medium to long-term facility spoke of their conscientious life before coming to HELP.

Women who had fled from domestic violence (violence from their husband or intimate partner) included a woman who turned to wide-area support because she could not receive adequate local support and a woman who was extremely insecure and needed to be with people at all times. There were also women who came to HELP seeking a safe place to stay for a short time to do what they needed to do to establish a stable life in their next place to live.

HELP Asian Women's Shelter receives women and children of foreign nationalities

Since 1990, HELP Asian Women's Shelter has operated with funding from the Tokyo Metropolitan Program for Emergency Temporary Protection of Foreign Women. We have solid experience providing shelter to women and children of non-Japanese nationalities.

For inquiries about using HELP as a shelter for non-Japanese women, please call us at **03-3368-8855** (weekdays 10:00 – 17:00).

<Telephone Consultation>

In 2022, HELP received inquiries over the phone from people representing 19 countries (20 countries last year), including Japan, on 968 matters (90.8% compared to last year). The total number of calls has decreased from last year, but the time spent on each consultation has increased.

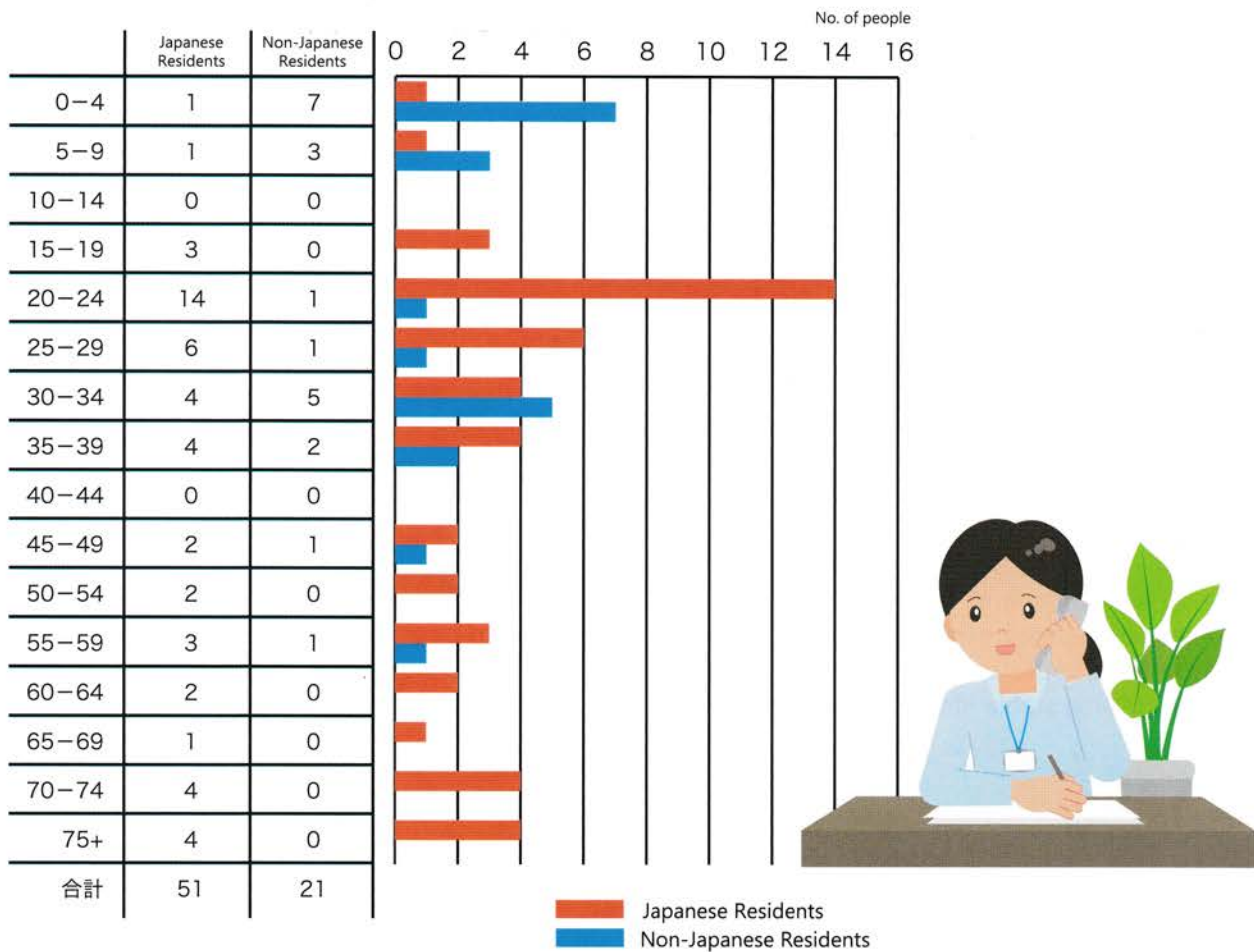
Calls from people of non-Japanese nationalities included calls regarding domestic violence and inquiries from former residents about matters concerning their present lives. These were referred to relevant organizations, in part. Additionally, there were diverse inquiries from nearby local governments (consultation desks), foreign support organizations, and other such institutions, such as regarding support for victims of domestic violence or impoverished people who do not have a status of residence that qualifies them for welfare.

Most calls from people of Japanese nationality were about the hardships of living after having suffered domestic violence or sexual abuse, as last year. Such calls came in days on end and are increasing in rate. There were also slews of calls from first-time callers as well as people who have called in before, several or several tens of years ago. These calls all illustrated how single women who are out of work due to COVID-19 and have increasingly fewer options of where to go are deepening their sense of isolation or are lost in confusion with too much wasteful time on their hands.



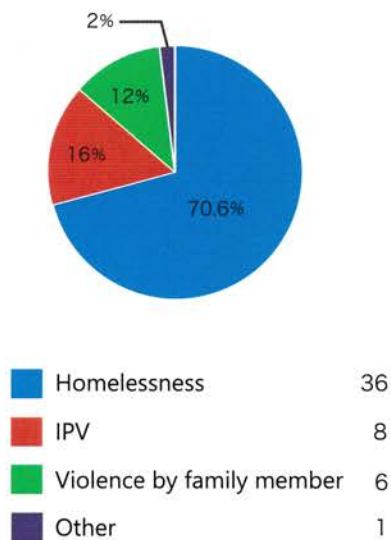
Statistical tables for 2022

Age Distribution of Residents

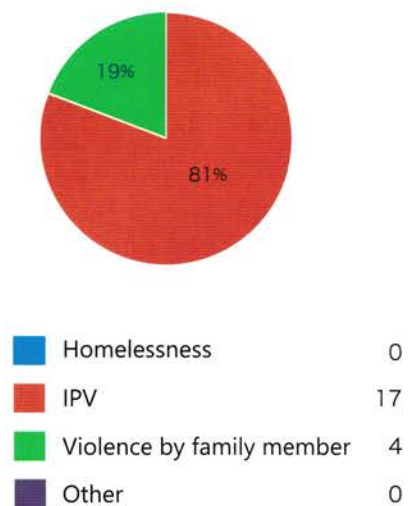


Reasons for Seeking Shelter (April 1, 2022 - March 31, 2023)

[Japanese Residents]



[Non-Japanese Residents]

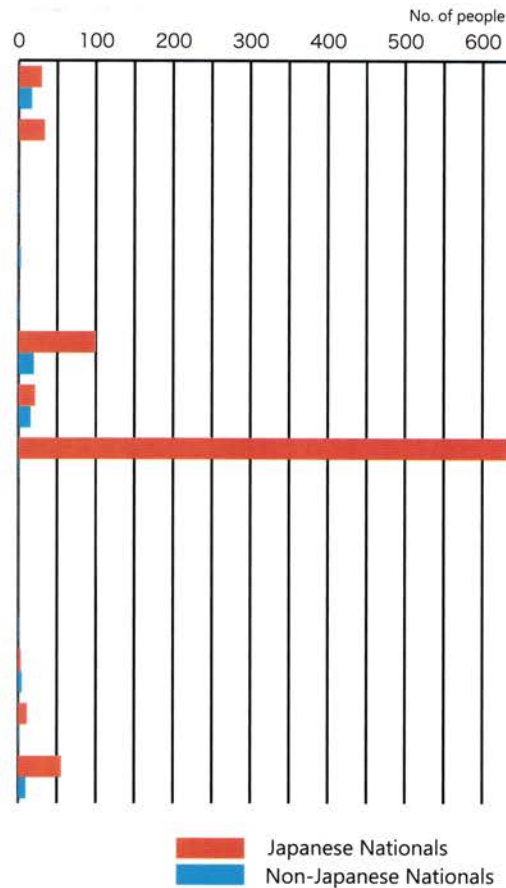




Number of Telephone Consultations

by subject

| | Japanese Nationals | Non-Japanese Nationals |
|------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| DV | 30 | 17 |
| Violence by family member | 34 | 0 |
| Human trafficking | 0 | 1 |
| Resident status/immigration | 0 | 3 |
| Work | 0 | 1 |
| Temporary protective custody | 100 | 20 |
| Information provision | 22 | 16 |
| Emotional problem | 634 | 1 |
| Marriage | 0 | 0 |
| Divorce | 0 | 0 |
| Problems in married life | 0 | 1 |
| Children | 4 | 5 |
| Homelessness | 12 | 1 |
| Other | 56 | 10 |
| Total | 892 | 76 |



by Nationality

| Nationality | No. of consultations |
|-------------|----------------------|
| Japan | 892 |
| Philippines | 23 |
| Sweden | 7 |
| Cameroon | 6 |
| Myanmar | 4 |
| Nepal | 4 |
| Viet Nam | 4 |
| China | 3 |
| Singapore | 3 |
| Ghana | 3 |
| Pakistan | 3 |
| Congo | 2 |
| Malaysia | 2 |
| Ukraine | 2 |
| Thailand | 1 |
| India | 1 |
| Korea | 1 |
| Belarus | 1 |
| Unknown | 6 |
| Total | 968 |

Number of Residents at HELP by Nationality (April 1, 2022 - March 31, 2023)

※ Including residents whose stay extended into the next fiscal year

Number of Residents at HELP by Nationality

| Nationality | Women | Accompanying Children |
|-------------|-------|-----------------------|
| Philippines | 3 | 3 |
| Myanmar | 2 | 3 |
| China | 1 | 0 |
| Ghana | 1 | 1 |
| Nepal | 1 | 2 |
| Viet Nam | 1 | 1 |
| Afghanistan | 1 | 0 |
| Singapore | 1 | 0 |
| Subtotal | 11 | 10 |
| Japan | 49 | 2 |
| Total | 60 | 12 |

11 Non-Japanese residents women of which
6 were accompanied by children

49 Japanese residents women of which
4 were accompanied by children

Breakdown of Non-Japanese Residents by Region

| Region | No. of residents |
|----------|------------------|
| Tokyo | 9 |
| Saitama | 1 |
| Hokkaido | 1 |
| Total | 12 |

Avg. Length of Stay by Non-Japanese Residents

| | |
|------|------------|
| 2018 | 50.03 days |
| 2019 | 46.46 days |
| 2020 | 76.75 days |
| 2021 | 17.92 days |
| 2022 | 41.95 days |

Total Length of Stay by Nationality

| | |
|------------------------|------|
| Japanese Residents | 1015 |
| Non-Japanese Residents | 881 |
| Total | 1896 |

Destination of Residents after Leaving HELP

| Destination | Japanese Residents | Non-Japanese Residents |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Welfare home | 26 | 6 |
| Apartment | 1 | 4 |
| Women's center | 4 | 0 |
| Home country | 0 | 0 |
| Home | 2 | 4 |
| Home of friend or acquaintance | 4 | 1 |
| Streets | 0 | 0 |
| Hospital | 3 | 0 |
| Live-in employment | 0 | 0 |
| Unknown | 4 | 0 |
| Undecided | 2 | 3 |
| Other | 5 | 3 |
| Total | 51 | 21 |

Art Therapy Initiatives Funded by the Tokyo Metropolitan Grant for Strengthening and Supporting Safety Nets for Victims of Spousal Violence

This year is the fourth year that programs implemented at HELP have been funded by the Grant for Strengthening and Supporting Safety Nets. Among the various programs, art therapy has attracted the interest of particularly many people. It was offered as one means to provide healing to residents at HELP and has benefitted many people over the past few years. Below is an account of how children and residents of non-Japanese nationalities took to the program and their artwork.



Children and Art Therapy

Children who come to HELP with their mothers have regularly witnessed domestic violence against their mothers or have been abused themselves by their fathers and have fled from such severe situations. They are guaranteed safety at HELP, but they bear the pain of being separated from friends in their neighborhood, school, nursery, or other familiar places. They also hurt to see their mothers hurting with worry about what life will be like for them in the future. To ensure their safety, residents of HELP cannot go to school or nursery, so the staff at HELP engage in various initiatives to support their physical and mental growth and to help heal their emotional wounds. Among these initiatives, art therapy provides a valuable opportunity for these children to free their minds.



A program that was offered on a certain day for a family with children was themed "Our Ideal Town." On a large sheet of construction paper, the mother drew a picture of a sun, and the children drew trains, a park, playground equipment, and various other things they liked. While talking with each other, the family ultimately agreed to draw a rainbow, so they ended up drawing a large rainbow in the sky. To the staff at HELP, the finished picture emanated the excitement that the family felt as they thought about what to draw, the joy the children felt as they drew what they liked, and a strong sense of hope in the future that the family has pictured for themselves.

On another day, a primary school boy participated in a program themed "My Treasure." The task consisted of decorating the outside of a small wooden box with various items. From among an assortment of materials, including colorful stickers, shells of all shapes, decorative tapes, and pieces of cloth, the boy chose what he liked after pondering over his choices. When the box was finished, he put into the box a necklace he made with the staff a few days ago. The necklace was something he worked hard on to resemble an item that his favorite anime character wears. The way he carefully carried his treasure box back to his room left a strong impression on the staff.

In another art therapy session that used paper clay and wires, two brothers made a picture of "outer space" and a photo stand, respectively. The staff still remembers how they selected their materials one by one while wondering what to choose and how they took their time with their creation while enjoying the texture of the paper clay.



Artwork by Residents of non-Japanese Nationalities

Foreign residents of HELP are from a wide variety of countries, but they all share a similarity in that they are struggling with various conflicts living in Japan where the language, culture, and customs differ from their own. They may have difficulty conveying what they wish to convey. They may feel stressed trying to be understood. They may constantly feel alienated from society. There is no end to their hardships. To these women, art therapy provides a valuable moment where they can freely express themselves without any use of words.

We staff at HELP are frequently amazed at their unique use of colors and their skills in using their hands. However, the most characteristic of many of these women is that they exhibit a rich self-expression and their artwork speaks clearly of their inner strength that "I am who I am." It is an inner strength that comes from their experience of overcoming and surviving many hardships.

It is also a salient feature of art therapy that it allows each individual's personality to manifest itself. Looking at their artwork, we always make discoveries about each resident, such as what they value, what they like, and what kind of life they had back home.

The art therapy program at HELP is organized by a knowledgeable and experienced therapist who decides on a theme in consideration of the objective and desired effect of each session, carefully selects the materials to be used, and makes the necessary preparations. We have come to understand that not only the task of engaging in art but the materials used also contain elements that lead to healing and recovery. In this sense as well, we are simply amazed at the profoundness of art therapy. We have only gratitude and appreciation for the program and therapist who have put smiles on our residents' faces.

In 2023, we have again applied for the grant so we may continue our art therapy and other programs we have accumulated so far. We hope, from the bottom of our hearts, that our initiatives can provide even stronger support going forward.



HELP Asian Women's Shelter Needs Your Support!

Maintenance Donations

The past year has once again been full of constraints and restrictions, but we hope this newsletter finds everyone safe and well. It is with deep gratitude to each and every one of you who has supported HELP that we have been able to continue our activities to lend a helping hand to women and children in need.

Last year, HELP provided shelter to 72 women and children from Japan, China, Myanmar, Nepal, the Philippines, Vietnam, Singapore, Afghanistan, and Ghana, and received calls for telephone consultation regarding women from 19 countries worldwide. There are many women and children who have suffered abuse and violence from their parents or family members or who carry within themselves a painful past and difficult present and need our help. To provide that help, we staff at HELP will continue to further our commitment and efforts.

However, given our difficult financial situation, we also need your support. Any maintenance donations you can offer will allow us to fulfill our mission. We thank you for your understanding and generous consideration.

July 2023

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 provide items of daily necessity to women and children who have come to our shelter deprived of their familiar surroundings, personal relationships, and much of their precious belongings. We hope the items provide a measure of stability so they may nurture hope and the will to begin a new life. With your generous support, we will make ongoing efforts to respond to the diverse needs of each of our residents in consideration of their age, nationality, culture, etc. We deeply appreciate your understanding and cooperation.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are currently accepting only new, unused items.
Thank you for your 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, undershirts (short and long sleeved), underwear (L, LL, XL)
***Children's clothing are not accepted at present**
- <Other> Folding umbrellas, shoes, notebooks, cotton blankets, bath towels and face towels, Quo Cards (prepaid cards), gift certificates, etc.

Please send goods donations to: KYOFUKAI
2-23-5 Hyakunincho, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 169-0073
***Please specify your delivery to be made between Monday and Friday**

