

Talitha Kum Japan is a network group among Association of Major Superiors of Women Religious and Association of Major Religious Superiors in Japan in collaboration with J-CaRM (Catholic Commission of Japan for Migrants, Refugees and People on the Move) commissioned by CBCJ (Catholic Bishop Conference of Japan) to counteract trafficking in persons.

"In a spirit of compassion, let us embrace all those fleeing from war and hunger, or forced by discrimination, persecution, poverty and environmental degradation to leave their homelands." – Pope Francis (2018 – World Day of Peace Message)

Towards a Better World

Everyday, mass media are spreading sad news: countries closing borders or expelling immigrants and refugees; crashes on the stock market; the abolition of alliances; the raising of tariffs between countries; and the danger of trade wars. Hearing all that, we get the clear impression that while some countries will become richer, others will become poorer. And this will open the door to more exploitation of poor countries by rich countries. Consequently, we are going to see more human trafficking and more organ trafficking.

Is this the world that God would like to see? On the contrary, when we read the Book of Genesis, we realize that God created the universe with sufficient natural resources for each member of the human family, and that God invited us to share among ourselves equally like brothers and sisters.

When we reflect on the problem of human trafficking, I remember a statement of the late President of the Philippines, Corazon Aquino, when she visited Japan: *"When a country is forced to have a great number of its citizens earning their living in the entertainment business, this country has reached the lowest level of the human condition."*

In this Christmas Season, let's ask Jesus, the Emmanuel (God with us) to guide us in building a just and fraternal world.

~ Charles Aimé Bolduc, M.E.Q - Member of the Steering Committee of Talitha Kum Japan



Awareness Seminar Against Human Trafficking

Talitha Kum Japan organized a seminar with a theme of "human trafficking and technical interns training program" that was held on November 17, 2018 at Catholic Koriyama Church in Fukushima Prefecture (Sendai Diocese).

This seminar was focused on the issue of human rights and labor violations, including trafficking, experienced particularly by many Vietnamese in the technical intern training program (TITP); the reality of the TITP system which is claimed as modern slavery and the breeding ground of human rights violation. There was a small group sharing about the current situations and challenges of the technical internship system and discussion among the participants on what we can do as members of the church about this issue.

Rev. Father Charles Aime Bolduc, a member of Quebec Foreign Mission Society (Sendai Diocese) gave an opening address citing that there are 30 persons per minute around the world who are forced to be displaced or migrated with one reason or another. Fr. Aime pointed out that we should not be indifferent towards migrants. The reality is that vulnerable people like migrants and refugees are easily targeted for human trafficking.

Ms. Motoko Yamagishi, J-CaRM Committee member, presented the first part about the "Reality and the issues of rapidly increasing number of technical interns." A video clip of interviews of former interns was shown. They were forcibly deported and maltreated by the employers including verbal and physical violence, harsh reality of sudden forced deportation, claim for workers' compensation against lost of eye-sight due to work-related injury.

At present, the largest group of the technical interns in Japan are Vietnamese, stood at 45 % (27,000) according to a recent immigration survey. Most of them suffer from numerous abuses and exploitation, forced deportation, etc. They were deceived into signing a contract without understanding it because of language barrier. As the number of technical interns increase, the number of those who seek help from the church is also expected to increase.

Mr. Shiro Sasaki, Secretary General of Zentouitsu Workers Union, gave a presentation on reported actual cases of technical interns like underpaid wages; unlawful deductions from salary; working hours violations; technical interns who were sent to nuclear disaster area for radioactive decontamination work that is not recognized as practical work for interns, etc. He emphasized about a gap between the idea and the reality of technical intern training program system. Mr. Sasaki furthermore listed the needs of support such as interpretation service (for consultation on labor issues, governmental procedures, livelihood support), housing (shelter, temporally or long-term protection facility), livelihoods (living expenses, medical expenses), securing residence/visa status (extension of period of stay, renewal). Five interns staying in the shelter at Koriyama were also introduced.



Participants Group Sharing

Many participants felt the needs for the church to be more aware and to become more involved on fighting against trafficking in persons. There was a media coverage during the seminar that made more interesting about the speaker's presentation. We hope to continue the awareness-raising campaigns like this seminar all over Japan. As members of the church, we shall be encouraged to get involved and committed to fight against human trafficking.

~ Sr. Naoko Miyazawa, F.M.A - Member of the Steering Committee of Talitha Kum Japan

Update Case Report - Filipino Students (Ryugakusei), Labor Exploitation Case

In the case of fifteen Filipino students came to Japan who were deceived by the owner of the Japanese language school and forced them to work for long hours and treated unjustly, the labor exploitation became evident.

May 2017, only half a year after they arrived, two executives of M corporation were arrested on suspicion of violating the Immigration Control Act, which had promoted "illegal work" of international students for working more than 28 hours. As a result of this incident, the case of 15 students from the Philippines were also investigated and illegal labor situation was discovered and they had to go back to the Philippines.

Before returning home, with a help of a Filipina Sister in Kyoto, 15 students filed a lawsuit at the Kyoto District Court seeking justice from the damage caused by large scale fraud and unpaid wages. In September 2018, one of them was asked to attend the hearing case here in Japan. TK Japan provided financial assistance for her airfare and accommodation. The trial is ongoing as of November 2018.

Talitha Kum Japan provides emergency financial assistance support for victims of human trafficking for shelter expenses, emergency living expenses, persecution or legal case, etc. We are most grateful for your generous donation to support the victims of human trafficking.

The case of 15 Filipino international students was only the tip of the iceberg of human trafficking. As long as the Japanese government denied to accept foreigners as "workers", the new forms of human trafficking will not end. ~ Motoko Yamagishi - Member of the Steering Committee of Talitha Kum Japan

Talitha Kum International Networking

~ Sr. Abby Avelino, MM - Member of the Steering Committee of Talitha Kum Japan

Talitha Kum coordinators and representatives of each country of Talitha Kum networks meet via "zoom" video conference for updates and priorities of Talitha Kum.

Talitha Kum International is a network of 22 regional networks on five continents (Africa, America, Asia, Oceania and Europe) in 76 countries. Sister Gabriela Botanni, SMC (Talitha Kum International Coordinator- based in Rome) recently gave a report regarding current movements in trafficking and migration as well as Talitha Kum's priorities toward the implementation of the "global compact" for migrants and refugees particularly in Africa and the Middle East regions where trafficking is growing.

The network group is committed to collaborative efforts in preventing, protecting and supporting victims of human trafficking. Talitha Kum Japan is striving for a better collaboration with neighboring countries such as the Philippines and Vietnam to prevent and protect victims of trafficking. We have agreed to promote safe migration and explore ways to strengthen networking between sending countries and receiving countries.

Talitha Kum is the worldwide network of women and men in religious life fighting against trafficking in persons. It was founded in 2009 inspired by the common interest of congregations on the five continents to coordinate and strengthen their work against trafficking in persons. (www.talithakum.info)

The year 2019 will mark the 10th anniversary of Talitha Kum. The TK Assembly will be held in Rome in September 2019.

The new logo for Talitha Kum was launched on November 8, 2018. According to Sr. Gabriella,



"The new logo perfectly synthesizes our history and efforts to give life back to human beings whose lives have been broken and violated by exploitation and trafficking!"

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. - Romans 15:13

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[We thank you for your generous financial support for Talitha Kum Japan. Your donation will be used to provide support for victims of human trafficking for shelter expenses, living expenses, legal case work, translation/interpreter, Newsletter, Seminars and Workshops Awareness Program] ~Japan Post Bank money transfer form is available at J-CaRM Secretariat office. Please fill in for "Talitha Kum Japan"; remittance charge is covered by J-CaRM. ~