

**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.**

## 「The Light of Sleeping Child Shines in the Darkness」

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

**We desire to be able to welcome Jesus at Christmas-time, not in a cold manger of our heart, but in a heart full of love and humility, in a heart so pure, so immaculate, so warm with love for one another."**

**– St. Teresa of Calcutta**



Sr. Naoko Miyazawa, F.M.A.  
Salesian Sisters

The spread of the new coronavirus (COVID-19) has created various alarming situations worldwide this year. Till now, as the virus continues its spreading, we are facing many challenges in many aspects such as physical and mental health issues; hard blows to local/global economy, labor and education disruption, etc. The coronavirus has threatened our lives in immeasurable ways.

Furthermore, the United Nations points out that while the pandemic crisis is affecting everyone, it exacerbates existing inequalities, injustices, and insecurities. Indeed, the poor and the most vulnerable have been hit the hardest by this pandemic.

Pope Francis, in his new encyclical [Fratelli Tutti], speaks about the trafficking in persons and other forms of slavery...*that needs to take seriously by humanity as a whole... Millions of people today – children, women and men of all ages – are deprived of freedom and forced to live in conditions akin to slavery... Today, as in the past, slavery is rooted in a notion of the human person that allows him or her to be treated as an object... Whether by coercion, or deception, or by physical or psychological duress, human persons created in the image and likeness of God are deprived of their freedom, sold and reduced to being the property of others. [24] He also points out that some people in our society are abandoned and ignored, and that racism is a fast-mutating virus.* \_

"Light shines in the darkness". Bible tells us that Jesus' birth took place in humble conditions...there were various inequalities and injustices even at that time. Let us reflect, the gentleness of the sleeping little child that brings us light in the darkness... the light of God will bring peace and hope, will restore, and heal all that is broken in humanity.

Pope Francis said in the same encyclical, "*Love breaks the chains of isolation and division; instead, it builds bridges; not excluding anyone, but open to all.*" Let us reflect on this with gentleness... the love of God that gives us this Christmas and hope encourages us to move forward during difficulties. We are not alone. "Immanuel, God is with us."



# 3-Series Webinar 2020: Impact of COVID-19 on Human Trafficking

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## Part 1: Migrant's Vulnerability to Human Trafficking

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~ Ms. Motoko Yamagishi - Member of the Steering Committee of Talitha Kum Japan

The first of a series of Talitha Kum Japan online seminars was held on September 11, 2020. The webinar focused on the situation of foreign migrants in Japan who are most vulnerable to becoming victims of human trafficking and are most likely to be greatly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The webinar started with an introductory talk by Bishop Mario Michiaki Yamanouchi, the bishop in charge of J-CaRM and Talitha Kum Japan. He began by looking back at the 10th anniversary of the establishment of Talitha Kum. Bp. Yamanouchi also shared Pope Francis' message that the *COVID-19 pandemic "has given us a chance to develop new ways of living..."*

Along with his talk on the effort and message of Pope Francis, the Bishop also raised questions to help us to reflect on our own experience of COVID-19 pandemic at this time in today's society.

The webinar continued with a presentation by Ms. Motoko Yamagishi. She talked about the current situation and the issues of human trafficking in Japan.

She gave a little bit of background on the human trafficking issue within Japan. The current anti-trafficking efforts of the Catholic church were then explained, particularly the establishment of Talitha Kum Japan with its specific twofold activities of combatting human trafficking and supporting the victims of human trafficking.

Lastly, Sister Maria Lang, a member of Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul and Talitha Kum Japan steering committee member, spoke about the current situation of Vietnamese technical intern trainees and Japanese-language students. These people were most affected by the pandemic. Many Vietnamese came to Japan under the technical intern training program. This system is said to be a "hotbed" of human trafficking. Sister Maria shared the response of the church to the needs of vulnerable migrants at this time, particularly to those who have lost their jobs, their ability to procure food, and who are living in difficult situations. She shared about her experience in launching the food support project entitled *A Cup of Love Rice Project*. So far, more than 5,000 people have benefited from this project.

Throughout the seminar, I think we were able to share what kind of human trafficking was taking place at this time of the COVID-19 pandemic, the current most vulnerable situations in which foreign migrants have been put, and the endeavors of the Catholic Church at this difficult time. Let us think and consider what we can do in this situation, no matter where we are and what we do.

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## Part 2: Global Situation: Impact of COVID-19 on Human Trafficking

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

COVID-19 has led to many significant changes in the way we live, work, and learn to adapt to the new normal. Talitha Kum Japan has also experienced restrictions due to efforts to contain the spreading of the virus. Since we could not hold the onsite seminars in the prevention of human trafficking campaign, the Talitha Kum Japan team decided to hold a three-part series of webinars for three consecutive Fridays in September with the title of "Impact of COVID-19 on Human Trafficking: Global/Local Situation and Spiritual Resilience". The second part of the webinar series was held on September 18, 2020, with the topic of Global Situation: Impact of COVID-19 on Human Trafficking. An estimated total of 200 participants joined via zoom from Japan, Philippines, Myanmar, Thailand, India, Indonesia, Cambodia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, South Korea, Nigeria, Tanzania, Kenya, Peru, etc.

We were fortunate to have Sister Gabriella Bottani, the Talitha Kum International Coordinator join us virtually from Rome as the main speaker.

The seminar started with opening remarks by Bishop Michael Goro Matsuura of Nagoya Diocese and Chairman of J-CaRM. Bishop Matsuura shared his own experience of accompanying many foreigners in Japan when disasters happened in the past.

The webinar continued with Sr. Gabriella Bottani's presentation. She started her talk by giving the background of the Talitha Kum International networks and how Talitha Kum has evolved in ten years.

She shared the global situation of increasing vulnerabilities to human trafficking at this time of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly for women, children, ethnic minorities, and foreign nationals who are the most affected. She noted that indoor and online exploitation, including domestic violence, sexual exploitation of children, women, and adolescents has escalated. Many migrant workers were abandoned after losing their jobs resulting in mobilization of masses of internal migrants, all due to the pandemic.

Aware of these situations, Talitha Kum networks are trying to respond to the needs of the most affected ones. She said that only by working in collaboration and solidarity with all entities involved, and weaving a web in love will we be able to confront the structural issues that cause and perpetuate human trafficking.

Sr. Gabriella stressed striving for Talitha Kum priorities in 2020-2025 in networking, formation, and communication.

She ended her presentation with a message of HOPE and encouragement, quoting the message of Pope Francis to Talitha Kum delegates (9/26/2019). *"Your work brings together the missions of different institutions and demands cooperation between them. You have chosen to be on the front line. Therefore, the numerous Congregations that have worked and continue to work as the "avant-garde" of the Church's missionary activity against the scourge of human trafficking deserve gratitude (see Address to Participants in the International Conference on Human Trafficking, 11 April 2019). This is also a model of how to work together. It is an example for the whole Church, and also for us: men, priests, bishops ... You are giving a great example – keep at it!"*.



Photos: Sr. Gabriella Bottani during her presentation.  
Left: Engaging zoom participation.

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### Part 3 : Covid-19: Hopes and Challenges to the Church Now and Ahead

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~ by Sr. Atsuko Kano, AASC - Talitha Kum Japan Steering Committee Member

We learned and heard from the first part of the 3-series webinars about the migrant's situation living in Japan who are most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Then, we heard from the second part of the 3-series webinars about the global situation of various grassroots activities carried out by the religious and lay people following the mission of Talitha Kum International.

And lastly, the 3rd part of the series webinars was given by Sr. Teruko Ito of Maryknoll Sisters. She focused on the hopes and challenges of the church in the future and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on human trafficking.

We were called to reflect on how we can accompany the victims suffering from the pain of human trafficking and the difficult situation caused by the pandemic. As we try to reflect on this question, we came to admit that

many of us are also living through difficult times and how we need to live truthfully with this uncertain situation. So, where do we begin!

First of all, Sr. Ito invited us to look at this aspect from a broader perspective for a dialogue with the whole of creation. And to reflect at the level of the Earth, and to ask for help from the whole of creation.

When we place ourselves in the cosmic perspective, we will find a new source of life. We can breathe deeply!

She invites us to focus on a search for a way to move forward. It's the journey together that matters and not the destination!

It is not where we are going, but how we are going together is important!

What is important is not the answer, but how to find the answer!

Through this webinar, we have experienced our circle of collaboration has expanded, and hope of moving forward together.

## February 8 : Feast Day of Saint Bakhita and International Day Prayer Against Human Trafficking (IDPHT)

~ Talitha Kum Japan Secretariat Committee

Every year on February 8, Talitha Kum Japan invites us to join for prayer and action against human trafficking. Due to COVID-19, as we adapt to the new normal using online tools such as ZOOM. Video conferencing has become a venue for meetings and seminars that allows many people to participate anywhere. This time, we plan to hold an online prayer on February 8, 2021 (Monday). Details will be posted later on our website(J-CaRM).

**TK International** is also inviting us to participate in **Online Prayer Marathon** on February 8.

**Theme: "An Economy without Human Trafficking"**

*"We urge the various realities engaged in the fight against human trafficking in a given country to coordinate with other similar organizations of the same country to present one moment of prayer each country! "Let us continue to pray, reflect, and act together against human trafficking. - Sr. Gabriella Bottani, smc"*

An image taken from a work by Canadian sculptor Tim Schmalz entitled "Let the oppressed go free" (Lk,4), representing Saint Bakhita.



We thank you for your generous financial support for Talitha Kum Japan. The donation will be used to provide support for victims of human trafficking for shelter expenses, emergency living expenses, legal casework, translation/interpretation expenses, newsletter, seminars, and workshops for the prevention of trafficking in persons.

Talitha Kum Japan (Catholic Commission of Japan for Migrants, Refugees and People on the Move (J-CaRM))

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