

Why Talitha Kum now?

Sr. Shizue Hirota, MMB

Newly Appointed Chairperson of Talitha Kum Japan Steering Committee



COVID-19 has made us realize that the world has indeed become globalized. Human trafficking is another example of the negative symptom of globalization. Let us recognize that the heinous crime of commercializing human beings is close to our daily lives. COVID-19, climate change, and human trafficking are all confronting us with the truth that everything is interconnected. When a problem becomes macro, we are tempted to give up in the face of barren resignation that there is nothing one person can do. The truth that everything is interconnected is a challenge to all of us to question how we live our lives. Whether it is

COVID-19 or climate change, the future of the earth and humanity will never be bright unless we take action to protect our own lives and the lives of others.

Similarly, unless we become responsible for being aware of the reality of human trafficking in a proactive way, many people, especially women and children, will be "consumed" as disposable "goods."

Talitha Kum is a global network that witnesses warmth and kindness to face this reality as human beings, accepting each person as a friend accompanying them. Talitha Kum states its objectives as follows

- to care for victims of human trafficking and exploitation and people at risk;
- to heal physical, psychosocial, and spiritual wounds;
- to empower victims and survivors, as well as individuals at risk, by amplifying their voices;
- to restore human dignity by promoting access to justice.

Even if we cannot take concrete actions, what is vitally important is to be concerned and aware in solidarity. In the 20th century, we used to say, "To think globally and act locally." Now, we are called to "think and act globally and locally". This is what it means to be part of the Talitha Kum network of cooperation.

Talitha Kum Japan Online Seminar Report

Motoko Yamagishi,
Talitha Kum Japan Steering Committee Member

On May 21, Talitha Kum Japan held Online Seminar under the title “The Issues of Technical Intern Training Program and the New Acceptance System for Foreign Workers ~From the Movements to Review the Program and the Catholic Church’s Activities”. 306 participants, including those from religious congregations in various parts of Japan and those from Talitha Kum Asia, attended this seminar.

Technical Intern Training Program of Japan has been criticized severely in the world for many years as a hotbed of human trafficking and modern slavery. It is one of the issues that Talitha Kum Japan has been tackling with emphasis through awareness building and assistance. In this year 2022, the fifth year after the enactment of Technical Intern Training Act, discussion about reviewing the Program, including law revision, is actively going on in Japanese government. Therefore, this Seminar was held in order to examine the future prospect of acceptance of foreign workers and how each of us can act as the Catholic Church against the violation of human rights of Technical Interns.

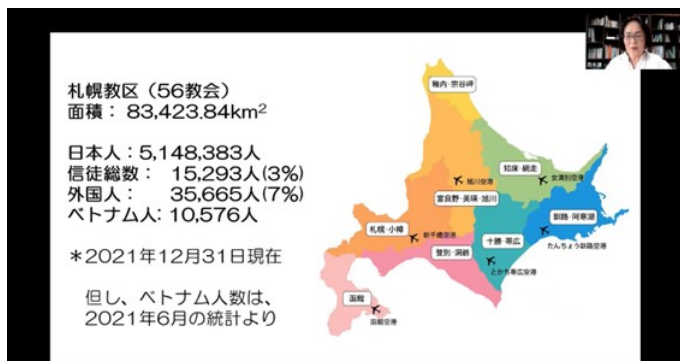
Bp. Michiaki Yamanouchi who delivered opening address, introduced the worldwide activities of Talitha Kum as “the challenging initiatives of the Church”, and talked about the suffering due to the Covid-19 pandemic of Vietnamese Technical Interns and workers and their families from Latin America whom he met during his pastoral visits in Saitama Diocese. He emphasized the importance of gathering and celebrating together as communities, becoming one body, one heart through Christ, and making efforts to enlarge our communities.



Then Mr. Akira Hatate (Committee member of the Advocacy Network for Foreign Trainees) gave us lecture under the title “The Issues of the Acceptance System for Foreign Workers~ The Limit of the Rotation Policies including Technical Interns”. Stating abundant data and concrete examples, he pointed out their distressing circumstance as

fundamental issues, in which they came to Japan with enormous amount of debt and in Japan they have no freedom to change jobs and will be forced to return to their countries if they claim their rights. He strongly argued that this Program needs to be abolished since the issues will not be solved even if the Program is improved. The Specific Skill System which started in April 2019 has not been operating widely due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Taking these situations into account, Mr. Hatate emphasized

that the limit of the rotation policies including the Technical Intern Program is clear, and it must be shifted into acceptance of permanent residential workers. He also stated that policies that guarantee the rights of workers and citizens are needed.



After that, case reports from Sapporo Diocese, Saitama Diocese and Fukuoka Diocese were presented about support to Technical Interns and foreign workers. Ms. Chizu Nishi from the Committee for Migrants and Refugees of Sapporo Diocese introduced the activities by Japanese and Vietnamese in Hakodate and Asahikawa regions where Vietnamese is

increasing. She also introduced the two cases of Vietnamese who were fired due to pregnancy and supported to return to Vietnam. Sr. Le Thi Lang from the International Center of Saitama Diocese introduced various activities including support for victims of forced repatriation and abortion due to pregnancy, counseling services, seminars about work-related injuries and the new issues due to Covid-19, and food support. In the end, Ms. Kazuko Ariyoshi from the Committee for Migrants and Refugees of Fukuoka Diocese introduced four concrete cases collaborating with local labor unions; cases of violence and unpaid salary suffered by Technical Interns working at a plastic processing plant and construction sites, and pregnancy. After 7 years of aid activities for Technical Interns, she stressed “Technical Interns are not disposable workforces, but the precious youth who will forge the future”.

In the Q&A section afterward, there were questions about the rights of Technical Interns. The national caravan that demands the abolition of the Technical Intern Training Program (Co-sponsored by J-CaRM) was also introduced. In the end, Sr. Filo Shizue Hirota, Chairperson of Talitha Kum Japan appealed in her closing address, “Let us do what each of us can do to abolish Technical Intern Program and accept workers respecting their human dignities, not just listening to this seminar.” Talitha Kum Japan continues to protest against labor exploitation, support victims, and provide awareness-raising programs.



Protecting a Tiny Life

Chizu Nishi,
Committee for Migrants and Refugees of Sapporo Diocese

A Filipina who was working in Hong Kong as a housemaid came to Hokkaido with her employer's family on vacation. On the next day, she felt abdominal pain. She was brought to a nearby hospital and prematurely gave birth to a 1,060 grams baby. She knew about her pregnancy. But she never told her employer because she was planning to give birth in the Philippines and then return to Hongkong to work again. Also, she wanted to see Japan and the snow which she never experienced before. So, she signed an insurance contract without mentioning her pregnancy to her employer.

The baby was transferred to a hospital in Sapporo with Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) because the former hospital where the baby was delivered does not have the facilities to respond to such issues. At this moment, the employer terminated her contract. She was given a transportation expense and a small amount for living expenses. She was at a loss and relied on the Philippine Embassy in Japan. The Embassy contacted an organization called Samahang Pilipino ng Hokkaido asking them to help bring her to Sapporo. The organization thought that the main issue was not the transfer of this mother to Sapporo but how she and the baby would live afterward. Two days before she moved to Sapporo, a member of the organization asked me to find a place where she could stay in Sapporo.



The baby was born when she was in the sixth month of pregnancy. When the baby came to Hokkaido, the weight decreased to 800 grams, but fortunately without no major handicap. The staff of the hospital said if the baby's weight exceeds 2300 grams, they can leave the hospital and return to their country. They said it would take about three months to reach the ideal weight. Collaborative efforts to help her started from this point. They recommended the mother to visit the

hospital every day to breast-feed the baby as much as possible, although the baby was too tiny to drink breast-milk by herself.

The hospital used to be managed by the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, Japan Province. The convent is near the hospital. Some members of the hospital used to be students of the sisters there. Therefore, we contacted the superior and other members of the convent to explain the situation of the Filipina

mother and the baby, which they completely understood. So, the mother started to live in the convent helping the works of sisters and visit the hospital every day.

The other problem was the medical expenses. Since she came to Japan as a traveler for a short period of time, she did not have health insurance. Besides, she lied about her pregnancy so health insurance did not apply to her. In other words, she had to pay all the medical expenses which would cost 3-4 million yen per month. The total charge for three months in the hospital would be 10 – 12 million yen. She could not pay such an amount. We tried to look for ways and means how to pay. Fortunately, since the baby was considered a subject for medical and infant care services, she was required to pay only ¥2,200 a month. Thanks be to God! With the help of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary sisters, she didn't need to work abroad immediately after returning to the Philippines.

The sisters in the convent named the baby “Yuki-chan” since she was born in a snow-covered land. Every day, the sisters asked her about the situation of the baby in the hospital and then prayed. It led her to regard the birth of the baby as a blessing. Now, “Yuki-chan” is already 4 years old. The mother sends us photos every time the baby's birthday approaches.



TalithaKum (TK) International and Asian Update

Clarita “Claire” Sanchez

Talitha Kum Japan Steering Committee Member

Participating in the TK’s Third International Leadership Formation

TK continues to spot and form potential leaders who are provided with the capability and competence to address the challenges and navigate the rapidly changing conditions of human trafficking by undergoing the well-thought-out TK leadership formation which has been established since January 2018.

This year, through the invitation and encouragement of Sr. Abby Avelino, I was extremely fortunate to be accepted into the TK Third Leadership Formation which started on March 4, 2022, until March 2023. In this course, there are 32 participants from 22 countries of mission and 22 nationalities that meet online once a week on Friday from 9:30 to 11:30 p.m. Japan time. It is conducted in three languages, English, Spanish, and French.

The course provides skills that will enhance leaders in developing professional and relational skills. The course content includes leadership models, networking, programming and development, economic management, communication, and fundraising. The participants are required to present a final thesis or project at the end of the course.

One of the factors that motivated me to come to Japan as a lay missionary, was the issue of the condition of young Filipino women being trafficked in Japan under the guise of entertainment from the 1980s up to the present. I have been in Japan for 8 years. The signs of the times are different from 10 years ago. The reality of the world is fast changing. Perspectives, paradigms, and approaches have evolved. That’s why I felt the need to update my professional skills and knowledge as well as my relational capacities so that I can address effectively the present needs of women and foreigners. The TK’s Third Training Course for Leaders is a perfect opportunity for me because it corresponds to my current concern for the mission.



Engaging in the TK Asian Network

While undergoing leadership formation, I was also plunged into the network of TK Japan and Asia. As a newcomer, I feel like I am on the job training. I am learning along the way as I attend every webinar and online meeting. In my few encounters with TK as an organization, I have seen how they have given a

substantial emphasis on education, advocacy, and networking which is admirably proactive in its approach.

Since I started this year, I have been introduced to the monthly Call to Action webinars organized by the Asian region. Like:

- TK Cambodia’s Call to Action: Empowering Women and Girls: Its role and response on January 29
- The online marathon of prayer and awareness against trafficking in persons on February 8.
- TK Bangladesh’s topic was the Prevention of Human Trafficking: Ensuring the Well-Being of Children, Elimination of Early and Forced Marriages on February 26.
- TK Thailand presented a topic on Care Against Trafficking: Sufficiency, Economy, and Empowerment of Women and Local Community on April 30.
- TK Indonesia’s Call to Action Webinar will discuss how to combat human trafficking and slavery in the supply chain on June 11.

In addition, this coming August 22-25, it will be my first time to join the TK Asian Conference which will be held in Thailand. The theme of this year’s conference is “Casting the Nets as Asian Network to End Human Trafficking”. The main objective of this conference is to develop and strengthen TK’s networking in the Asian region and to expand collaboration with other like-minded organizations (faith-based and civic).

I am hopeful that these small steps or initiatives that each TK member is treading create a humane society that illustrates the Kingdom of God.

Voice of the Youth

Rise Hosoi

Talitha Kum Japan Youth Ambassador,



One of my friends once said to me that human trafficking is only happening outside Japan and it has nothing to do with Japan. I must admit I was thinking the same way as her before I joined Talitha Kum. I thought human trafficking was somewhere far from me. But I was completely wrong and naive.

Since I became a member of the Youth Ambassador of Talitha Kum, I became aware of the issue of human trafficking. I have learned that human trafficking occurs in Japan, and Japanese are not just perpetrators of human trafficking. There are also Japanese who are victims of human trafficking. Many of the foreign technical intern trainees working in Japan are victims of human trafficking. It is heartbreaking to know what is really happening during the production process of products and all the sacrifices made during that process. How can we still say human trafficking has nothing to do with me or Japan?

We, the youth ambassadors of Talitha Kum, hope that the young people in Japan recognize this issue as their own. So, by using social media and holding events, we try to spread awareness among youth in Japan. We would be very happy if you can check our Instagram @tkjapanyouth after reading this article and also come to one of our events.

At the end of each event, we ask all the participants to go back home with one phrase. “Share what you learned today.” It can be with your family, friends, classmates, partner, anyone is fine! You don’t have to know every detailed situation of human trafficking. It is enough to know the word “human trafficking”. I believe peace begins from knowing.

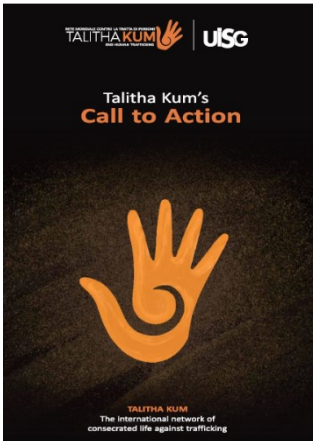
I would like to finish this by quoting a phrase by Mother Teresa, “We ourselves feel that what we are doing is just a drop in the ocean. But the ocean would be less because of that missing drop.” Let’s be the drop.



Japanese Version of the “Call to Action”

On November 25, 2021, Talitha Kum International announced an official document “Call to Action”, and Talitha Kum Japan has translated it into Japanese.

“Talitha Kum’s ‘Call to Action’ is addressed to Sisters, to the Catholic Church and religious leaders of other religious or spiritual traditions, to non-believers, to allies, friends and all people of goodwill who share our vision of a world free from human trafficking and exploitation.……This ‘Call to Action’ is shaped around



four main objectives: to **care** for victims of human trafficking and exploitation, and for people at risk; to **heal** physical, psychosocial and spiritual wounds; to **empower** victims and survivors, as well as individuals at risk, by amplifying their voices; to **restore** human dignity by promoting access to justice.”

This document aims at strengthening the network of spiritual cooperation for solidarity and action against human trafficking. It explains how to care for those who were afflicted by the violence of human trafficking and exploitation.

Please read the “Call to Action” in order to be aware of the issue of human trafficking which Pope Francis defined as “modern slavery which is a violation of human dignity”.

Talitha Kum Japan Online Seminar in Autumn

Following the webinar held in spring, Talitha Kum Japan will once again host an Online Seminar this coming Autumn on October 1st (Saturday) from 14:00 to 16:00 PM. This seminar also focuses on Technical Intern Training Program. Simultaneous English interpretation will be provided. As soon as we have more detailed information, will let you know. So, please come and join us!



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.

**~Japan Post Bank money transfer form is available at the J-CaRM Secretariat office~
Postal # 00110-8-560351**

Talitha Kum Japan (Catholic Commission of Japan for Migrants, Refugees and People on the Move (J-CaRM))
Japan Catholic Center 2-10-10 Shiomi, Koto-Ku, Tokyo, Japan 135-8585
Tel:(81)03-5632-4441 Fax:(81)03-5632-7920 ✉ jcarm@cbcj.catholic.jp / ✉ japan@talithakum.info