

The Power of Love



Valeria Martinez FDCC

Steering Committee Member of Talitha Kum Japan

"When I was a slave, I never despaired. I felt a strength that sustained me."

These are the words of St. Josephine Bakhita, a Sudanese saint who was kidnapped at the age of 7 and forced to live as a slave for 10 years. Bakhita was freed thanks to the kindness of an Italian diplomat. He bought her to restore Bakhita's dignity and return her to her village.

But Bakhita did not remember the village of her origin, so she continued to serve him. This diplomat then took Bakhita with him when he returned to Italy. In Italy, Bakhita met Jesus and was baptized. She then consecrated herself to the Lord in the congregation of the Canossian Daughters of Charity. Bakhita is the patron saint of the fight against human trafficking.

I wanted to begin this article with this story because I felt it reflected a bit of Talitha Kum. The work of love by an Italian diplomat paved the way for Bakhita's freedom. Acts of love are the foundation that formed Talitha Kum and the driving force behind working as a member of Talitha Kum. We cannot simply stand by and watch the suffering of so many of our brothers and sisters. We need to form a network of kindness through concrete actions to break the chains of the powerful network of evil that infests the world. Sometimes they seem too small to work, but they steadily bring freedom to people with names and families.

Since last year, I have been accompanying a group of Talitha Kum Youth Ambassadors. Their mission is to inform other young people about the reality of human trafficking and to condemn it. They decided to dedicate what little free time they had to practicing their activities. This year, they are focusing their efforts on training new members of their team to deliver classes at schools and to inform their students about the reality of human trafficking and modern-day slavery. It is not easy to match their work schedule with the demands of the school, but they work hard, sometimes sacrificing their days off, to achieve their goals.

It may seem that there is not much strength in the activities of Talitha Kum. We may think that the evil networks of human trafficking and slavery are too strong to break. But we know that we are not alone and that there is a power within us that sustains us and unites us. That is why we can begin to walk together to liberate our brothers and sisters. It is the same power that sustained the enslaved Bakhita, and it is the same power that sustains the slaves of the modern world. That power is the power of the Lord's love. That power invites us to go to our brothers and sisters and say to them, "Talitha Kum", which means, "Little girl, I say to you, arise."

Talitha Kum Japan Online Seminar in Autumn 2023
“A Society that Welcomes Refugees
~From the Efforts of Arrupe Refugee Center~”

Sr. Ayumi Nagase FMA
Talitha Kum Japan Steering Committee Member

On November 4, Talitha Kum Japan held an online seminar. Bishop Michiaki Yamanouchi, Chairman of the Catholic Commission of Japan for Migrants, Refugees and People on the Move (J-CaRM), opened the seminar with the following words: "The reason why people in many countries in Europe and Latin America are moving so rapidly today is political and economic problems that have increased anxiety among people, and they are seeking safer places to live in the present and for the future of their children. He said that because the world's problems are spreading further, it is necessary for everyone to have the same awareness and the same vision.



This seminar welcomed Mr. Kenji Arikawa (Executive Director of NPO Arrupe Refugee Center) as a lecturer. At first, he spoke about refugees, saying that there are more than 110 million refugees in the world, that one in every 80 people in the world is a refugee, and 40% of them are children. These figures show that the children of the next generation, who will be responsible for the future, are in a precarious situation. Japan became a signatory to the Refugee Convention in 1981, but to date, less than 1% have been recognized

in this country as refugees. In other words, in 41 years, Japan has actually recognized only 1,117 refugees (1982-2022), ranking 110th out of 148 signatory countries to the Refugee Convention.

Next, he introduced the activities of Arrupe Refugee Center, which was established in April 2020 at a Jesuit monastery in Kamakura as its base of operations to support refugees, including providing shelter, protection and other needed services. The center mainly accepts asylum seekers on provisional release. Its main activities include Care: providing shelter and medical consultation/care, support for long-term settlement, a place to learn for self-reliance and support for refugee application procedures; Connect: farming every Saturday to connect refugees with the local community, and volunteer activities at local day-care centers. Change: raising awareness of refugee issues and creating opportunities for people, old and young to learn about refugees' condition through seminars and advocacy work as well as participation in community events. In April 2023, another shelter was started at the Mission Congregation of the Servants of the Holy Spirit in Koganei.

Recently Japan has accepted 2,518 Ukrainian refugees in 19 months. This shows that Japan is actively accepting Ukrainian people. Until now, Japan has been reluctant to accept refugees, but with the government's recent acceptance of Ukrainian refugees, many local governments, companies, and private organizations have expressed their support for actively accepting refugees. We hope this will help the welcoming of refugees to take root. During the Q&A session, when asked why Japan does not accept refugees, it was suggested that often because they do not know or have not met refugees yet, there may be a sense of discrimination.

Finally, Sr. Shizue Hirota MMB, Chairperson of Talitha Kum Japan, stated that we have a responsibility to make the issue of immigrants and refugees visible in civil society, and emphasized that Pope Francis constantly appeals to "welcome, protect, promote, and integrate migrants, refugees, and people on the move into the community and society," and she concluded the seminar with the prayer of Pope Francis in his message for the 2022 World Day of Migrants and Refugees.

Report on Lectures at Catholic Schools by Talitha Kum Japan

Motoko Yamagishi
Talitha Kum Japan Steering Committee Member

In the previous issue of this newsletter, I informed you that Talitha Kum has started giving lectures to various schools in Japan. This time, I would like to report on two lectures I have done this fall.

<Gyosei Junior & Senior High School>

On October 6 at Gyosei Junior and Senior High School, I spoke on the theme of "Toward a Society of Living Together - Consideration from the Current Situation of, and Efforts made for Refugees, Immigrants, and People with Foreign Roots Living in Japan" during the first period of the religion class for students from 2nd year junior high school to 3rd year high school at 8:25 am. After entering the auditorium, the students greeted me with a loud "Ohayo gozaimasu" (Good morning),



The teacher in charge of their religion class asked me to give a lecture in the short 45-minute class on the situation of people with immigrant roots in Japan, a situation that is rarely noticed by students, and to encourage them to think about what they can do to help. So, I introduced my own shocking experience of learning about starving children in an African refugee camp when I was a junior high school student, which led me to become involved in this kind of work. I also talked about people I have met directly since becoming involved in supporting foreigners in Japan as well as the current situation of refugees and immigrants in Japan and the efforts being made to support them.

I concluded my presentation by introducing the situation of refugees and immigrants around the world, the efforts of the Church, and a message of Pope Francis. The entire hall was quiet and the students were listening intently, especially during the video message by a high school student from Peru, who is of the same generation as the students. Gyosei Junior & Senior High School has a volunteer program to connect students with social activities, so I look forward to further collaboration in the future.

<Seirei Senior High School in Akita Prefecture>

On October 15, I spoke again on the theme of "Toward a Society of Living Together" at the religion class called "Seirei Spirit (Holy Spirit) for second-year students at Seirei Senior High School in Akita. This School has an international course, and students with immigrant roots are also present in the class. The 90-minute class included a lecture followed by group discussion and time for sharing with the whole class.



This School was severely damaged by the record-breaking rain disaster in Akita in July, so electricity, boilers, and water facilities were underwater and lifelines were cut off. I realized the faculty and students are still using temporary facilities and continuing classes with great difficulty on a daily basis. In their experience of the disaster, they have received power and encouragement from people throughout Japan, including the Catholic Church. I hope that this lecture and the sharing that followed were a time for faculty members and students to reflect on "living together", overlapping their current experiences with the situations of refugees and immigrants in Japan who are facing difficult circumstances.

Talitha Kum Japan is still accepting applications for this kind of lecture, so please contact our Secretariat office if you are interested.

Talitha Kum International Update **“Talitha Kum’s Contribution is More Than Just a Drop in the Ocean”**

Clarita R. Sanchez
Talitha Kum Japan Steering Committee Member

I have been an active member of Talitha Kum Japan Network for over a year. In my limited capacity, I tried to contribute to the fight against this well-organized and well-connected network of human trafficking by helping the Talitha Kum Youth Ambassador in their advocacy campaign.

However, it always breaks my heart whenever I hear news about the wars going on in Ukraine and the Middle East, the social and political upheavals in many countries, and people suffering from dire poverty. Because I know there will be more vulnerable individuals in these affected areas who are potential victims of human trafficking. Oftentimes, I feel that my efforts and initiatives are not sufficient and effective enough to end human trafficking.



Nevertheless, I was consoled to hear the annual report of Talitha Kum International released on June 12th of this year, on the occasion of the International Day against Child Labor and the World Day against Trafficking in Persons. The 2022 report shows remarkable growth in the areas of prevention, protection, prosecution, and partnership.

Talitha Kum has grown into a network of networks that reaches 560,606 people worldwide. This is an increase of 40% compared to 2021. Of these 560,606 people reached, 34,463 were victims or survivors, 442,276 benefited from prevention actions, and 83,867 were involved in networking, training, and capacity-building activities. Although there has been great growth in activities, there has been a slight decrease in active members and collaborators 5445 (about 554 units - 9% less).

Another thing that impressed me from the report is the strong collaboration with other religions or inter-faith-based groups, which is marked by its 31% growth in 2022, at the local, regional, and international levels, particularly in Asia, Africa, and Oceania. Talitha Kum promotes collaboration among networks organized at national, regional, and continental levels, actively supporting victims, survivors, and people at risk. The report reflects this multilevel structure and collects the contribution (data) of all coordinators and members of the network.

I know there is still a long way to go to end human trafficking. But the thought that most of the women and men who volunteered to get involved in Talitha Kum’s mission, I believe, we already have won half of the battle. After all, our efforts are not just a drop in the ocean. As Mother Teresa said, “Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love.” Kudos to all the volunteers of Talitha Kum International Network!

¹ https://www.talithakum.info/files/documentdownload/2023/report2022_en.pdf

Beware of Online Scams!

Sr. Le Thi Lang DC

Talitha Kum Japan Steering Committee Member

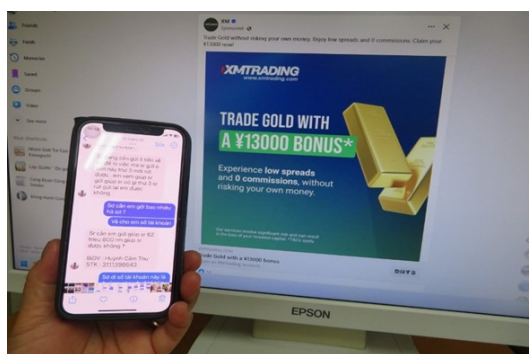


The world is now a world where the internet has made life more convenient in many ways. In many areas, the Internet has become a way to instantly connect people. In particular, social networks (SNS) such as Zalo, Facebook, and Twitter have brought people together and advanced communication and information exchange in all aspects of life.

Young Vietnamese who come to Japan for study or technical intern training always use iPhones to keep in touch with their families, schools, companies, and friends. However, despite the convenience, young people are often involved in crimes such as scam, gambling, and drug trafficking using SNS. Although scams have been around for a long time, they have taught each young person valuable lessons about vigilance and self-preservation skills.

I am Sr. Maria Lan, a Vietnamese Catholic nun of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul. I work for the Vietnamese at the International Center of the Diocese of Saitama. Every day we receive more than a dozen consultations on various areas such as labor accidents, violence, pregnancy, etc. Online scams in particular have been on the rise recently.

Here are some examples of the consultations. One technical intern trainee sent us this letter. I have been robbed of about 3 million yen, all the money I saved after working in Japan for 7 years. Another foreign student was cheated out of nearly 2.5 million yen. And, a man who attended a marriage seminar at Kawaguchi Church said, "I gave money for my wedding to an acquaintance who was going back to Vietnam, but he just ran away. I am so sick with debt that I want to jump into a car and die..." There are many other cases like this.



I went to the Japanese police with one of them and asked for help, but we were told, "This is an international criminal fraud organization, so it is difficult to investigate and almost impossible to get the money back. I had a lawyer who gave a talk about this matter and alerted people widely through Facebook. However, still people continue to fall prey to such scams. I am always searching for ways to prevent people from becoming a victim.

Voice of the Youth “Talitha Kum Youth Summer Camp”

Carlos Baptista

Talitha Kum Japan Youth Ambassador



I was in a sleep deprivation. The loud alarm sounded at 4 in the morning forced me to wake up as I was promised by an acquaintance that it was for a good cause. I carried my backpack for 30 minutes walked to Sendai station to catch the earliest shinkansen for a three our trip to Tokyo, Setagaya. I want to happily report to you readers, that this summer camp was a worthwhile trip.

Amazing community needs amazing people

She tried so hard to persuade me to join Talitha Kum. It was only brief descriptions, such as they are passionate, or they are amazing young people. Vague descriptions left imagination to wonder as I wondered how a passionate person looks like in person.

If I would describe in a simple phrase, this summer camp was a crescendo of connection, we grow a link between the members as minutes passed by. We started by basic explanations about human trafficking and presentations by the professionals. I felt like the spark started when we listened to a real victim of this human cruelty. To be fair, I did not understand most of what he talked since it was in Japanese and my Japanese level was daily conversational. However, we could see from his face, the tone of his voice, and the gesture of his body language. It was cruel.

The best sacrifice is a sacrifice with pain. It is common to see someone teary eyed after a sad story. However, it was hard to witness our leader cried her eyes out for 5 minutes after the story ended when she was leading us for the next activities. Be in person and you can tell that it was a passionate empathy emerging from her. I was convinced that Talitha Kum is a great community.



I initially thought that it would be a mind-numbing monotonous event in which listening to seminars and people was the only thing to do. I was completely wrong as in between session we did not forget about the basic human need, which is rest. The icebreaking was very straightforward and really helped us becoming close to

each other. The man and woman behind these were super energetic, I thought they were in their early 20s just like me. I wanted to learn which fountain of youth are they drinking their

daily intake of water from. Finally, to the person who ordered pizza for dinner. Although we did not interact much because of her hectic life, I would like to say you had a great sense. The pizza selection was perfect.

Amazing community needs robust foundational ideas and real impact

One day passed and I kind of understood the gist of what Talitha Kum is advocating, a fight against human trafficking. I came to Japan 5 years ago from Indonesia, with the idea that Japan is the perfect quirky country. Quirky in a sense that Japan has a peculiar culture that is unique to Japan, like how they glorified animation and in contrast preserving traditional heritage. Behind the curtain is instead a darkness lurking in between the society which you can only understand only after living long enough here.



What I am impressed about Talitha Kum is that they already have identity in which a lot of organizations unfortunately do not have. When facing with this huge conundrum, they settled to have the role of advocator. We are not police that disband a human trafficking group. We are not an orphanage that shelter human trafficking victims. We are not psychologist that try to solve this perpetrator messed up minds. We are someone that tells story and increases awareness, so that this chaotic world can at least be a more bearable place for us to live. We introduce young people to the reality in the hope that they will not become the victim or the perpetrator.

Additionally, Talitha Kum makes their program a reality. On the second day of the summer camp, we got plunged into real requests from two schools. I was thrilled by it. Long I have been part of a catholic church community, not many programs get translated into directly affecting the society. We brainstormed ideas and exchanged information. These back-and-forth interactions were intense yet a certain respect towards each other was given, resulting in a very productive discussion.

In the 2-hour Shinkansen ride back home to Sendai, a deep conversation between me and



the acquaintance. How blissful she was when the vision she had for this Talitha Kum group has materialized. For myself coming far from Sendai, I was really blessed to have a new family in Tokyo. A community that delivers impact to the society. Looking back on writing this essay, I would say that it is only described 50% of their greatness. I really recommend the readers to check out our activities.

International Day of Prayer and Awareness Against Human Trafficking (Feb.8)



On Thursday, February 8, the Feast of St. Josephine Bakhita, the International Day of Prayer and Awareness Against Human Trafficking, Talitha Kum International will hold a prayer pilgrimage like the previous years. This year's theme is "Call to Action: Listen, Dream, Act."

Talitha Kum Japan will join the pilgrimage through a video, which will also be seen on YouTube. More details on the program and URL link will be provided later, so please join us!

Talitha Kum Japan Pamphlet

Starting to offer lectures at Catholic schools, Talitha Kum Japan has published a pamphlet for youth (A5 size, 4 pages). In addition to the Japanese version, English and Vietnamese versions are also available! Basic questions are answered in an easy-to-understand style, so please contact our Secretariat if you would like some copies.



What is "Talitha Kum?"

It is an Aramaic word in the Bible, which means, "Little girl, I say to you, rise up!". Jesus addressed these words to Jairus' daughter, a 12-year-old girl who lay dead. When Jesus took her hand, she immediately stood up and began walking. These words are a call to the victims and survivors of trafficking in persons who have been suffering to rise and live with hope.

This call is the driving force behind the activities of Talitha Kum, an international network of the Catholic Church.





What is human trafficking?

It is a crime whereby traffickers exploit women, children, and all other vulnerable people by forcing them to move to another country or place to engage in prostitution or forced labor through violence, threats, kidnapping, fraud, or other coercive methods.

A Voice from Talitha Kum Japan

Did you know that Japan also has this problem of human trafficking? Young people as old as you are have become victims.

The U.S. Department of State has released its 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report, which evaluates 188 countries and regions, and for the fourth year in a row, Japan's rating has remained at "Countries whose governments do not fully meet the minimum standards". It indicated the continuance of reports of forced labor under the Technical Intern Training Program of Japan. In an aging Japanese society, it is young people from other countries who are engaged in so-called "3K" (Dirty, Hard, and Dangerous) jobs.

Talitha Kum Japan strives to be part of a network that reaches out to those who are forced to work under working conditions that disregard human rights in an environment with a different language and culture.

First, why don't we consider getting to know, taking an interest, and becoming companions?



Sr. Shizue Hirota MMB, Chairperson of Talitha Kum Japan

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

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