

"Little Girl, I Say to You, Arise!" (Mk. 5:41)

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"I have witnessed the affliction of my people in Egypt and have heard their cry of complaint against their slavedrivers, so I know well what they are suffering. Therefore, I have come down to rescue them from the hands of the Egyptians" (Ex.3:7-8). These are the words God said to Moses from the burning bush when God called and commissioned Moses.

Our Christian faith has its origin in this event of liberation from slavery, the Passover. Under the rule of Pharaoh King of Egypt, the labor imposed on the Israelites was extremely hard (Ex.1:14). Moses as the liberator, led the people out of Egypt to the Promised Land, but this does not mean merely moving from place to place. The Bible consistently rejects the domination of human over another, but calls for the establishment of the Kingdom of God, a nation ruled by God alone. Thus, the people are transformed from slaves of men into servants of God, not men, which means becoming independent people living the freedom of God's children. This relationship between the rulers and the ruled, the powerful and the weak, and the tragedies that result from this relationship can be seen in all aspects of our lives today.

The vision of Talitha Kum Japan, as stated in its Charter, is the eradication of human trafficking, modern-day slavery, and forced labor in our society. And the Talitha Kum's mission is to network with consecrated persons, lay people and many others inside and outside the Church, in order to work towards justice and restoration of dignity in the lives of marginalized people.

The wars in Ukraine and Palestine have no end in sight, and a tremendous number of people are in harsh situations. The number of refugees in the world is said to have exceeded 100 million, and they are in a situation lacking even the minimum guarantees of life, let alone human rights. The issue of technical intern trainees working in Japan still remains.

Jesus says "Talitha-koum" and makes the girl arise. Jesus restores to those who are overwhelmed by despair, sadness and suffering back the hope they had almost lost, and urges them to arise and act on their own. Let us, following Jesus' example, accompany those who are being crushed by huge powers, and drawing strength from Jesus, reach out and help them get back on their feet.

Talitha Kum Japan Online Seminar in Spring 2024
Continuing Support for Women Engaged in So-Called “Night Work”
~The Submerged Reality of Sexual Exploitation and the Support Activities~

Motoko Yamagishi

Talitha Kum Japan Steering Committee Member

Talitha Kum Online Seminar was held on June 1, 2024 with approximately 250 participants. This was our first seminar to address the issue of sexual exploitation of young women in Japan. The featured speaker was Mr. Arata Sakamoto, representative of NPO Rescue Hub based in Kabukicho, Shinjuku which provides outreach, counseling, shelter, and other support to women engaged in so-called "night work".

Mr. Sakamoto began providing outreach support to women engaged in sex industry and prostitution in Kabukicho in 2018, while working in a former NPO that supports victims of human trafficking, and established this new NPO, Rescue Hub, in 2020. It conducts outreach activities three times a week, provides a drop-in center and shelter for counseling twice a week, and accompanies and supports them to administrative offices, police, legal institutions, medical institutions, etc. It protects women engaged in the sex industry and prostitution from isolation, sexual exploitation, and criminal damage, and serves as a "hub" to connect women with difficulties to appropriate social resources.

When he first started his activities, many victims of sexual exploitation and violence were isolated, unable to consult with the police or public institutions because they thought they were not eligible for public support since prostitution is illegal. After the Covid 19 pandemic of 2020, the women engaging in prostitution in Kabukicho increased rapidly due to economic hardship, poverty, family issue and social isolation. Its consultations include those related to sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy, housing, employment, welfare, debt, drug-related issues, and even criminal cases. Specifically, they helped a foreign woman who was tricked into coming to Japan for a different job and forced to repay travel expenses and engage in prostitution. Another example is the case of a Japanese woman who was making a living through prostitution due to domestic problem, and her pregnancy wasn't found until late. He connected her to welfare assistance and supported childbirth.

I learned a lot from his attitude of not denying the victim's way of life, but taking a step forward to offer a helping hand, patiently maintaining the connection until the time she wants to change her environment. He shared with us his struggles during his career switch and his most frequently muttered phrase over the past four years: "The Lord is with me". This seminar touched the hearts of many participants. The Q & A session was very active, and we received a great response in the questionnaire. Talitha Kum will continue to address the issue of sexual exploitation of young women from now on.



Talitha Kum 2nd General Assembly

Sr. Ayumi Nagase F.M.A

Talitha Kum Japan Steering Committee Member

The 2nd General Assembly of Talitha Kum was held at Fraterna Domus in Sacrofano from May 18 to 24, with the participation of 153 religious, priests, and lay people from 60 Talitha Kum networks in 71 countries, as well as representatives of Youth Ambassadors working in various countries, to 1) share experiences and listen to the grassroots, 2) embrace our identity and diversity as an international network of networks, 3) strengthen relationships, networking, and collaboration, 4) revisit our priorities for action in light of emerging realities, and 5) celebrate 15 years of Talitha Kum.

At the event, there was an exhibit area dedicated to each continent where guests could learn about the initiatives being taken to stop human trafficking. Situations differ from place to place, but the testimony given by those who testified before the general meeting about the extent of the destruction was unbelievably brutal. However, I was touched by the lifestyles of individuals who have persevered through hardships and bravely worked to end human trafficking with the support of kind people. I felt anew that such tragedies should be eradicated from the world as quickly as possible.

After listening to reports of activities by representatives of various countries and testimonies of victims, we discussed future plans and concrete decisions through “Conversations in the Spirit,” a Synod-like method, and were able to create a final declaration of the Talitha Kum Network for the five-year period from 2025 to 2030.

A meeting with the Pope was scheduled for the last day of the meeting, but unfortunately, due to health reasons, we were unable to meet him. Nevertheless, he conveyed a message. He said; “To be truly effective against this odious criminal phenomenon, we need to be a community. This is no easy task, yet during these past 15 years you have shown us, on every level, that it can be done. Talitha Kum has become a widespread global network and, at the same time, deeply rooted in the local Churches. It has become a reference point for victims, their families, those at risk and the most vulnerable communities. I encourage you to continue on this path, furthering prevention and care, and weaving together many valuable relationships that are indispensable in order to combat and defeat trafficking.”

This General Assembly has provided me with a wide range of current information on the current situation. We were encouraged to make more progress, but in the meantime, the problem of human trafficking is growing rapidly. In order to eliminate this criminal activity, we need the cooperation of many, not just a few. We have been working as a network, and while seeking further cooperation, we sincerely hope that a world where each and every person is valued will come sooner than later.



Delivering Lectures at Schools

Rikako Nishikawa

Talitha Kum Japan Youth Ambassador



I conducted lectures in three schools: St. Dominic Elementary School (December 2023, Sendai City), Salesian International School (January 2024, Setagaya-ku, Tokyo), and Gyosei Primary School (February 2024, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo).

To introduce pupils to the concept of human trafficking, we focused on child labor for elementary school students and sexual and labor exploitation in Japan for high school students. First and foremost, we attempted to transmit the concept of "trafficking in persons" in an understandable manner through quizzes and recitation play so that students would grasp what it is and that it is not something that happens remotely to others but rather something that occurs in our immediate surroundings. For the high school students, we adopted a case study approach to sexual exploitation in Japan. Each pupil was engaged and listened closely. Students, especially in elementary school, were so engaged that they couldn't stop raising their hands to speak. In primary schools, we had kids fill out postcard-sized cards with messages and artwork addressed to children suffering from child labor all around the world. I was touched by the children's honest thoughts and comments, which expressed a desire for peace.

After class, we always discussed how, despite going to schools to warn students about human trafficking, we were also made aware of new perspectives and concepts from the students. Many things were unknown to us until we began teaching the classes. We made mistakes and reflected on them. Meanwhile, with each passing session, we felt like we were evolving as well. The teachers also gave us feedback on what we did well and where to improve. We want to brush up even more in the future.

At first, I thought I had to teach something in class, but with no prior teaching experience, I was concerned about my ability to do so. However, after discussions with other members and repeated preparations, I realized that what is required in a class taught by young people is not a one-way teacher-student relationship but rather for young people to think together about the issue of human trafficking and share their ideas with one another. We will be able to think about it collectively if we first let the younger generation, who have never encountered the subject of human trafficking, become interested in it, learn about it, and spread the word. This became the primary focus of our lecture program. We want to continue to express through our seminars that, while each person's influence is limited, we can address the major issue of human trafficking if we all work together.



"A Reality Not of Someone Else's But Ours Too."

Fr. Joya Kijima

J-CaRM Member of Kagoshima Diocese



Nice to meet you. I, Joya Kijima, have been the parish priest of the Murasakibaru Church of the Kagoshima Diocese since 2023, and appointed as a member of the Catholic Commission of Japan for Migrants, Refugees and People on the Move (J-CaRM) of the Kagoshima Diocese.

During the Nagasaki Regional Committee Meeting in Fukuoka, I heard the current situation of Vietnamese technical intern trainees in Japan, particularly in Kyushu region. I was particularly surprised to hear that many SOS notices had been received from trainees in Kagoshima as well. Learning that they were power-harassed and treated unfairly by their employers and other Japanese, I began to feel that what I had thought as other people's problems happening somewhere far away is becoming a reality.

During a meeting in Tokyo in October, I heard that a SOS notice was received from two Vietnamese women trainees working as interns at a farm in Kagoshima. I was allowed to accompany the Kitakyushu Labor Union members to that company in late November. I was told that depending on the attitude of the employer, we might soon protect the two by getting them out from that place. In such a case, I thought it was all right for them to stay at the church for a while, and I told so to the union members. I also told one of the parishioners that I might protect and bring the two Vietnamese women trainees to the church. I was happy and reassured when the parishioner said, "I am willing to take them to my place for two or even three months".

Anticipating that would not happen, I went to the site and spoke with the employer's wife since the employer was out of town. Seeing her dominating attitude, the union members thought it seemed dangerous and impossible to leave the two there, so we decided to take them into custody. What we had thought impossible became a reality. The trainees then lived with the parishioner for about three months. Although they were not Catholics, they attended Mass almost every morning, accompanied by this devoted parishioner. At first, they enjoyed each other's company, but the relationship often became strained, perhaps because negotiations were not moving forward.

Finally, both of them found new jobs and are now living in peace. One of them mentioned that she would apply for the Specified Skilled Worker Program. I would like to thank the parishioner who took care of the two to the end despite various tension and hardships. I also felt the need to set up a base for this matter in Kagoshima, and I would like to work toward that goal.

Voice of the Youth

“Journey in Dignity Toward the 10th Anniversary”

Rise Hosoi
Nayeli del Rocio Soto Ortiz
Talitha Kum Japan Youth Ambassador



From 3rd to 9th February, youth representatives of partner organizations from all over the world gathered in Vatican to commemorate 10th International Day of Prayer and Awareness Against Human Trafficking, aiming to empower each other and take an initiative to “Walking in Dignity: Listen, Dream and Act” this year’s theme. Two young representatives from Japan delivered the following messages.

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“Buongiorno. I’m happy to share my journey with you. LISTENING and sharing of experiences at the same time difficulties and struggles for fighting against human trafficking with each other reminded me one African proverb. It says when the spider webs united, they can tie up the lion.

As the role of Talitha Kum Youth Ambassador is advocacy, we visit to the schools, primary to high school, and youth groups of churches to deliver classes about human trafficking and set awareness among youth.

DREAMING is important part of advocacy. However, to be honest, I sometimes feel difficulty of it. Because it doesn’t give us the results immediately, we have to keep dreaming the better world, believing in ourselves and have faith with God. Sometimes I couldn’t stop asking myself what I’m doing is good and meaningful. Facing the reality of human trafficking made me feel powerless and vulnerable.

God always has the plan. I’m privileged to come to Vatican and have a chance to realize that I’m not alone, we are not alone fighting against human trafficking, and we have each other. When we bring our energy, power and passion, there is nothing we can’t do.

ACTING for human trafficking is challenging and requires courage because human trafficking is the crime threatening us in many ways and disrespects human right and dignity. We can’t stand against human trafficking without each other.

Now I myself am about to celebrate the 3rd year of being Talitha Kum Youth Ambassador. I’m grateful for this opportunity and this week spent together, which gave me the power to keep walking the journey to end human trafficking. We are all in this together. Let’s pray for people who are suffering and fighting.

-Rise

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This event left me with a sense of partnership and hope, realizing that many individuals are working for the greater good. Each contributes at their level and with their means, and together, I am confident we can bring a significant positive change.

Throughout the week, we participated in various awareness events, but the two that impacted me the most were: firstly, when Pope Francis mentioned Talitha Kum during the Angelus in St. Peter's Square. It was an emotional moment, that made me let out a brief cheer of excitement. The other moving event was when we performed the "Flash Mob" followed by the "Vigil of Prayer" in the Church of Santa Maria of Trastevere.

Before saying more, I would like to clarify what the "Flash Mob" was about. We executed a group dance, embodying the key event words: "LISTEN," "DREAM," and "ACT." Simultaneously, we displayed words we had previously drawn, forming fragments of the event's logo gradually by the sequence's end. It was undeniably a beautiful and artistic way to demonstrate how cooperation and each individual's effort contribute to the puzzle of combating human trafficking.

Following this, we had the Vigil of Prayer inside the church, highlighting the elements of FIRE, EARTH, WATER, AIR and METAL, symbolized by various sounds and symbolism, followed by a brief reflection. I vividly recall the moment when one of my colleagues from Kenya walked down the central aisle wearing a traditional dress from her region while carrying a rain stick, an instrument symbolizing water. It was a deeply spiritual moment for me.

In the end, we concluded with the Online Marathon of Prayer, showcasing the participation of young people from diverse organizations creatively expressing their commitment to fight human trafficking.

Undoubtedly, it was an emotional and enlightening week, from which I hope to bring motivation and different ideas to enhance our organization's work. Additionally, I express gratitude to God and the organizers at Talitha Kum for giving me the opportunity to meet so many incredible people I can call friends and from whom I have learned and will continue to learn a great deal.

-Nana Soto



Talitha Kum Japan's New Facebook Account



Talitha Kum Japan has recently launched a Facebook account. The account will introduce our activities, such as seminars, to eliminate human trafficking.

The full text of the Japanese translation of the Final Declaration of the General Assembly this May and the following message from the Pope are posted and can be download. Please access the account using the QR code on the right.



The Message of Pope Francis to Talitha Kum (Whole Text)

15 YEARS TOGETHER: THE MESSAGE FROM POPE FRANCIS

Dear sisters and brothers of *Talitha Kum*!

I am pleased to welcome you at the end of your second General Assembly and on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of your network's foundation. I am very grateful for what you do, both individually and all together, to combat human trafficking, one of the most terrible scourges of our time.

Human trafficking is a "systemic" evil, and therefore we can and must eliminate it through a systematic, multi-level approach. Trafficking is fueled by wars and conflicts, thrives on the effects of climate change and socio-economic disparities, and takes advantage of the vulnerability of those forced to migrate, as well as the conditions of inequality in which they find themselves, especially women and girls. Trafficking is a "business" that disrespects and disregards human dignity, delivering large profits to the unscrupulous. Trafficking is constantly evolving and always finding new ways to develop, as it did during the pandemic. Yet we must not be discouraged. With the power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ and the dedication of so many, we can succeed in eliminating it.

We need to continue along the path of what you in *Talitha Kum* have always done: to stand by the victims, listen to them, help them get back on their feet and together take action against trafficking. To be truly effective against this odious criminal phenomenon, we need to be a community. This is well expressed by the theme of your assembly: *Journeying Together to End Human Trafficking: Compassion in Action for Transformation*.

This is no easy task, yet during these past 15 years you have shown us, on every level, that it can be done. *Talitha Kum* has become a widespread global network and, at the same time, deeply rooted in the local Churches. It has become a reference point for victims, their families, those at risk and the most vulnerable communities. Furthermore, your appeals act as a strong reminder to local and national institutions and governments to take up their responsibilities in this regard. I encourage you to continue on this path, furthering prevention and care, and weaving together many valuable relationships that are indispensable in order to combat and defeat trafficking. Dear sisters and brothers, I join you in thanking the Lord for all the work he has enabled you to do over these years. I will read your document carefully and promote it. May Our Lady always accompany and protect you. I offer you and your communities my heartfelt blessing. Please continue to pray for me. Thank you! Pope Francis

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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