

Solidarity Network with Migrants Japan (SMJ)

2011 Activity Report (Jan-Dec 2011)

0. Introduction

With the earthquake and tsunami in Tohoku, we co-operated with other groups to undertake relief efforts, survey local conditions, and help with the recovery. Thus began the first part of 2011. While coordinating multi-cultural and multi-ethnic aid activities, SMJ requested for necessary statistics and sent petitions to the government.

Regionally, with the full implementation of the new foreign resident control system coming up in the summer of 2012, we conducted last minute ministry-level negotiations. While doing so, we also broadly spread information about this system to the general public. We demanded and lobbied for a comprehensive immigration policy created from the standpoint of protecting the rights of migrant workers and their families, rather than based on control and exclusion, as is symbolized by the new foreign resident control system. By such lobbying and other actions, in 2011 SMJ carried out broad actions based on the actual conditions of the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society which is already beginning.

1. Great East Japan Earthquake Relief Activities

As regards the Great East Japan Earthquake, we made emergency requests to the Chief Cabinet Secretary and the Emergency Disaster Management Office regarding aid to foreign residents. We also relayed requests to the Emergency Disaster Management Office related to the conditions of foreign residents. While requesting information from the government, conducting surveys in the affected area, and investigating the situation of immigrants in the affected area, we also provided information to member organizations in Japan. We compiled a special edition of SMJ's monthly magazine about the disaster in Tohoku. We also utilized our mailing list, contributed to the exchange of information in our network, and coordinated multi-ethnic and multi-cultural aid activity. SMJ also gathered funds to contribute to foreign residents' schools which were affected by the disaster and co-operated with other groups to gather relief supplies for Tohoku. While doing these things, we coordinated activities for soup kitchen in evacuation centers, and activities to support the re-building of disaster-stricken communities after the closing of the evacuation centers.

2. Advocacy Activities

1. A Comprehensive Policy Proposal and Activities to Demand its Realization

In our document titled "Demands toward Implementing the Recommendations of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants", we demanded that the government draw up a comprehensive immigration policy. Towards this end, through the DPJ Secretary General's office, we met with ministerial aides of the Chief Cabinet Secretary; the Cabinet Office; Justice Ministry; the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare; Foreign Ministry; and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. At those meetings we made demands pertaining to each ministry's area of responsibility.

We had planned to organize a workshop for Diet members on the topic of migrant women. However, this workshop had to be cancelled due to the earthquake and was held at a later date either. At the Immigration Policy Study Group, we invited then chief of the Institute of Foreign Residents Education In Japan and held a discussion on education.

The ministry-level negotiations took place in March and November. During these negotiations, we held separate, additional talks when necessary.

2. Creation of a Law to Guarantee the Human Rights of Foreign Residents

(1) Efforts toward creating a Basic Law on the Human Rights of Foreign Residents, a Law on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and a National Human Rights Body.

In our participation with other groups toward demanding the creation of a national human rights body, we shared SMJ's proposals and actively worked toward getting those proposals approved as joint demands.

(2) On the Application of the International Human Rights Treaties

As part of the NGO Network for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, we participated in the "government negotiations towards implementing the UN's recommendations on eliminating racial discrimination".

(3) With the report on human rights in Japan released by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants, we held a symposium at Meiji Gakuin University on International Migrants' Day. The symposium was titled "Memorial symposium – a roadmap toward the building of a comprehensive immigration policy considering the UN Special Rapporteur's recommendations to Japan".

3. Efforts Related to the New Immigration Control Act, Special Law on Immigration Control, and Basic Resident Registration Act

We submitted a public comment regarding the new immigration and residency act.

4. Efforts Concerning Detentions and Deportations

We worked with other groups as regards the problem of detention and forced deportation. We worked on the cases of some overstayers (long-term residents/single people) with the aim of these individuals obtaining special residency permission.

3. Network Building

1. National Forum

We held the "Eight Solidarity with Migrant Workers Japan National Forum-2011 Tokai" June 18th (Sat)-June 19th (Sun) at the Nagoya Campus of Chukyo University.

2. Network Building

(1) We mapped out our cooperation with the Tokai/Nagoya region's "Tokai Network For Supporting Foreign Residents".

(2) We co-operate with the following networks:

① Women's Project

The Women's Project spent a lot of time negotiating our demands with the Justice Ministry regarding the revocation and change of status of residence. The project made a report at the Meeting to Call for the Expansion of Appropriate Measures for Women's Issue for the third revision of Domestic Violence (Prevention) Law. Also, the Women's Project submitted a public comment on the changes to the immigration law. They also co-operated in setting up a dedicated line for migrant women on the Cabinet Office Gender Equality Bureau's "Purple Dial" service. In addition, we published "A Proposal and Surveys of Municipalities Concerning Migrant Women DV Policies."

② Advocacy Network for Foreign Trainees

This network undertook discussions with the relevant ministry on the trainee issue. They continued their analysis of the changes that will be brought on by the move to the new technical intern training system. The network dealt with trainees' and interns' problems from various regions on a case by case basis, while regularly publishing "Trainees' Rights Network Report"(研修生ネット通信). Also, they provided information on multiple occasions to the US government's "Human Trafficking Report". Finally, the network continued to operate a shelter for trainees and interns and provide necessary protection for them through difficult operating conditions.

③ Medical Care and Livelihood Support Network

The project is continuing to hold regular meetings at least once a month. They accepted proposals and consultations about individual cases, and also discussed how to deal with local authorities now that the new immigration law is in place. They also co-operated to write the NGO report on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

④ Xenophobia Watch Network,/ Taskforce for Immigration Control Act

While providing information on the work involved in transitioning to the revised Immigration Control Act and the Basic Resident Registration Law, they made known its problematic points. The groups published the "Q&A on Immigration Control Act for Foreigners"(外国人のための入管法) in multiple languages. Additionally, while holding workshops in various locations, in October they also held a symposium titled "Multicultural Society and the New Immigration Law". At this symposium the network made clear how the new residency management system will affect various fields. Also, they continued their preparations to make a questionnaire for municipalities all over Japan.

⑤ General Movement for the Lives and Rights of Foreign Workers

This group set up regular meetings and mapped out collaboration on the sharing of information. They carried out the usual ministry-level negotiations in the spring. The group had to cancel the "March in March" event and their day of action in April due to the disaster in Tohoku. However, they were able to broaden their co-ordination with other groups through the preparation for the "March in March".

⑥ Japan Network Against Trafficking in Persons (JNATIP)

Among other activities, information was shared and coordination was undertaken among groups within this network.

⑦ Network for Human Rights Legislation for Foreigners and Ethnic Minorities

SMJ operated this group as part of its secretariat. Also, they published "2011 White Paper on Foreign Residents' and Ethnic Minorities' Human Rights". They advanced their co-operation

towards drawing up the NGO report for the Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights.

⑧ **NGO Network Against Racial Discrimination (ERD-Net)**

This network participated in the “government negotiations toward implementing the UN’s recommendations for the elimination of racial discrimination”.

⑨ **The Migrant Poverty Project**

The Poverty Project accepted the Pfizer Project’s grant, and implemented a project titled “Foreign Residents’ Poverty and Capabilities”. The project created capacity building program for migrants in taking part in advocacy. The project also attended events hosted by other groups to share results of the study. It also published a booklet titled “Migrant’ Poverty in Japan”

4. Division for International Human Rights

1. SMJ’s Participation in International Forums

March: We participated in the UN Human Rights Council (Geneva, Switzerland), and made statements regarding technical trainees, anti-discrimination legislation, and a domestic human rights body for Japan. (With the financial support of the Asia Community Trust.)

September: We participated in the Day of General Discussion (GDG) of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (CMW) on the issue of the rights of irregular migrants.

October: SMJ participated in the general assembly of Migrant Forum in Asian (MFA), which took place in the Philippines.

November-December: SMJ participated in People’s Global Action on Migration, Development, and Human Rights (PGA). We also partially participated in the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD).

2. Activities Related to International Human Rights Treaties/Organizations

June: SMJ made a statement in response to the report made by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants regarding his findings in Japan. We also translated the Rapporteur’s report.

July: SMJ convened a meeting on the above-mentioned report in Diet Members’ Office.

December: Also, concerning the same report, SMJ held a symposium for International Migrants Day at Meiji Gakuin University.

5. Publicity/Information

1. M-Net’s Publication

(1) We enhanced the content and design.

(2) We planned the improvement of the editing process.

2. Operation of SMJ’s Mailing List (migrant-j)

The operation of the mailing list continued without problems.

3. Editing/Publication of Literature

- (1) SMJ edited “30 Ways to Change for Migrants-friendly Society”(移住者が暮らしやすい社会に変えていく 30 の方法)
- (2) We published a booklet titled “Migrants Poverty in Japan.” (日本で暮らす移住連の貧困)
- (3) SMJ published “Report on Commemorative Symposium for International Migrants Day.

4. Upgrading on SMJ’s Website

SMJ obtained a new domain name, began work to revamp our website, and created a main page for the website.

6. Organizational, Operational, and Financial Issues

1. Organizational/Operational Issues

(1) Working Meetings

We held a total of three working meetings: 2/19 Tokyo 6/18 Nagoya 10/1 Osaka

(2) Secretariat

Meetings of SMJ’s secretariat were held once a month.

2. Financial Issues

We still needed to secure long-term funding.

(1) Increases in Membership and Subscriptions

Some members participated as groups and some as individuals. Regarding subscriptions, some individuals subscribed, but the number grew at a sluggish pace from 2010.

	Members (Memberships)	Subscribers (Subscriptions)
As of Dec 31 st , 2010	Individual: 311 (318)	Individual: 57 (57)
	Groups: 79 (99)	Groups: 17 (26)
As of Dec 31 st , 2011	Individual: 325 (331)	Individual: 59 (59)
	Groups: 81 (103)	Groups: 16 (25)

(2) Development of Revenues

SMJ wasn’t able to undertake our plan to gain revenue from the dispatch of lecturers. However, some revenue was earned through the sale of literature.

(3) Applications for Grant Funding and Other Aid

SMJ accepted Pfizer Pharmaceutical’s continuing grant (2009 Pfizer Program-Support for Citizens’ Action Research Regarding Physical and Mental Care)till the end of 2011. For the purpose of disaster relief work in Tohoku, we also received financial assistance from the Japan Pacific Resource Network. Also, through the same network, we also received financial assistance from the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee.

(4) Fundraising activities geared toward SMJ’s activities and financial situation.

We undertook a summer and winter fundraising campaign.