

Solidarity Network with Migrants Japan (SMJ)

2012 Activity Report (Jan-Dec 2012)

0. Introduction

Revised Immigration Control Act, Special Law on Immigration Control, and Basic Resident Registration Act came into effect on July 9 2012. SMJ has worked on the issues concerning information dissemination to migrants, municipalities' responses, and undocumented migrants. On the other hand, a political situation has dramatically changed after the lower-house election caused by the dissolution of the Diet, while the expanding exclusionist ideas and discrimination, inspired by deteriorating diplomatic situation with neighboring countries, casting a dark shadow over the election.

Meanwhile, strife of foreigners, who has been isolated by community and therefore cannot reach the needed assistance, remains severe, even two years after the great earthquake in March 2011. Against these backdrops, SMJ carried out broad actions aiming at protecting rights of migrants and their families, and realizing multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society.

1. Advocacy Activities

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

Recognizing that the new residence control system of 2012 is moving backward in the need of right-based comprehensive immigration policies and in the existing multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society, SMJ advocated migrants' rights within policy makers and society as a whole. It called for signing petition for regularization of undocumented migrants and also held a press conference, among other things.

The ministry-level negotiations took place in March and November. Special negotiation sessions were also held in June and August in addition. Case-based negotiations took place when necessary.

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

As one of the network members, SMJ participated in rallies on Law on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and hate speech, attended meeting with Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and cooperated to follow-up the examination by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

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

SMJ's effort to the issue focused on 1) dissemination of information, 2) municipalities' responses and cooperation with civil servants' union, 3) legalization of status of undocumented migrants (amnesty and easing standard for special permission to stay). Signatures calling for amnesty for undocumented migrants reached over 10,000 before its final submission to the Minister of Justice. SMJ also started talk with some officials from Ministry of Justice regarding the "Guidelines for Special Permission to Stay." It also submitted Public Comment on "policy approach deciding five-year residence status," and held a press conference immediately before the enactment of the new law. After the implementation of the law, SMJ tried to gather

information on the effect of the law.

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 overstayers (long-term residents/single people) with the aim of these individuals obtaining special permission to stay.

2. Network Building

1. National Forum

We held the “Ninth Solidarity with Migrant Workers Japan National Workshop 2013 Niigata” June 23th-24th 2013, in Niigata University of International and Information Studies.

2. Network Building

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

① Women’s Project

The project undertook three or so negotiation sessions with the government on residence status of migrant women (such as revocation of the status and renewal of the status) and domestic violence. The project also engaged in lobbying regarding Hague Convention and its effects on migrant women.

② Advocacy Network for Foreign Trainees

The network had meetings with government on specific issues. It continued analyses on situation after the new system was introduced in 2010 and started preparing drafting policy proposals. It responded to individual cases upon its report. " Trainees’ Rights Network Report” 研修生ネット通信) has been published regularly. It also shared information with US Embassy and participated in the press conference in addressing the problem as human trafficking.

③ Medical Care and Livelihood Support Network

The project is continuing to hold regular meetings at least once a month. It cooperated with Taskforce for Immigration Control Act. Its members also discussed about free / low-cost medical service and medical interpretation and brought up these issues to the government negotiation in November.

④ Taskforce for Immigration Control Act

The taskforce held monthly meeting, where its members shared the national and local governments’ situation. It published “Q&A on Immigration Control Act for Foreigners” upon release of government and ministerial ordinances as well as after the Act was put in force. Members also gave lectures on the new system so that the information of the revised act will be spread. Further, the taskforce organized symposiums in March, July, and December. It also held government negotiations in June and August; started collecting “Appeal for participation in the ‘Live Together’ Declaration”; undertook a survey targeting nation-wide municipalities (100), publicized its result widely to media.

⑤ General Movement for the Lives and Rights of Foreign Workers

The group held regular meetings and shared information. It carried out the government negotiation in the spring and organized the “March in March 2012.” It also held a one-day collective action and demonstration in April.

⑥ Japan Network Against Trafficking in Persons (JNATIP)

Cooperating with other members within the network, SMJ shared information on trafficking issues. SMJ participated in the government negotiation with other network members.

⑦ Network for Human Rights Legislation for Foreigners and Ethnic Minorities

SMJ operated as a part of its secretariat. Also, they published “2012 White Paper on Foreign Residents’ and Ethnic Minorities’ Human Rights.” The Network 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)

SMJ participated in events addressing issues of racial discrimination and hate speech, and attended a meeting with Ministry of Foreign Affairs, submitting a petition on the issue.

⑨ The Migrant Poverty Project

It started a new project that reveals the situation of migrants’ poverty, utilizing statistical resources obtained by National Census. Articles based on the study have been published in several periodicals.

3. 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.

4. Publicity/Information

1. M-Net’s Publication

(1) The editorial team was joined by a new staff, strengthening its organization.

(2) The editorial team started considering electric publication and new ways to sell the magazine.

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

Mailing list operation has been moved to a new server. The operation of the mailing list continued without problems.

3. Editing/Publication of Literature

(1) "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), edited by SMJ, has been published.

(2) SMJ started preparation for publishing electric version of "A Guide to Foreigners' Rights in Japan."

4. Upgrading on SMJ's Website

SMJ's website was moved to new server with a new domain; however, could not make a progress in upgrading the website.

5. Organizational, Operational, and Financial Issues

1. Organizational/Operational Issues

(1) Discussion on possibility to register as a Non-profit organization (NPO) was held. A meeting among co-representatives was held in December, where they agreed on a project and other plans in the following years.

(2) Steering Committee Meetings

A total of four Steering Committee Meetings were held: 2/2 Tokyo 4/14 Nagoya 6/23 Niigata, 9/22 Kobe

(2) Secretariat

Meetings of SMJ's secretariat were held once a month. Increasing the number of secretariat staff or sharing tasks with steering committee members were necessary, in order to overcome unequal burden of the task on the secretariat.

2. Financial Issues

We still needed to secure long-term funding.

(1) Increases in Membership and Subscriptions

Membership declined both in individual and group. Individual and group subscribers increased.

	Members (Memberships)	Subscribers (Subscriptions)
As of Dec 31 st , 2011	Individual: 325 (331)	Individual: 59 (59)
	Groups: 81 (103)	Groups: 16 (25)
As of Dec 31 st , 2012	Individual: 311 (314)	Individual: 73 (73) (Student:4(4))
	Groups: 81 (103)	Groups: 16 (25)

(2) Development of Revenues

Sending lecturers could not be developed into a solid project; however, individual lecture and article fee became some revenue.

(3) Calling for donation based on SMJ financial situation and activities

We undertook a summer and winter fundraising campaign.