

エンパワーするNGO



YWCA of Japan Annual Report 2021

YWCA of Japan

Profile

YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association) is an international NGO where, upon a Christian foundation, women from around the world exceed the barriers of language and cultures and work together to encourage women's participation in society and to realize a peaceful world where human rights, health and environment is protected. The movement began in Great Britain in 1855, and nowadays, it works in more than 100 countries throughout the world.

The YWCA of Japan works with 24 local YWCAs and 37 junior and senior high-school YWCAs, in order to empower women, children and older people, who are put in vulnerable situations, as well as to train and nurture leaders stipulated in our vision. It holds ECOSOC consultative status since 2019.

Vision

A society where women exercise leadership, and where human rights, peace and environment is valued

Mission

Empowering young women and working together for social change

Values

1. Christian basis

Trusting that all people are equal before God, we will act in the footsteps of Jesus Christ who always stood on the side of the vulnerable.

2. Peace and environment

We treasure and uphold the Constitution of Japan, which was created upon the regret and lessons from the Asia Pacific War.

We deny all nuclear weapons and energy, and strive for a just and sustainable society without all forms of violence including military bases.

3. Human rights

We respect diversity in all regards including race, nationality, religion and age, and strive for a society where everyone can live as themselves with gender equality.

4. Safe Space

Our programs are driven by volunteers, and all our work will be managed on a democratic and multigenerational manner.

We consistently create a safe space for all people, where everyone is empowered.

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Leadership Training for Young Women

Japan-Korea Youth Conference 2021 - LGBTIQ+ and Religion

Young Women Creating Online Safe Spaces

The Japan-Korea Youth Conference, an international program for young people in Japan and Korea to learn about issues common to both countries and consider solutions for a better society, was held with 24 participants from Japan and 9 from Korea. Due to the impact of COVID-19 pandemic, the program was held once a month from September to November, as a series of three online meetings.

The theme was “LGBTIQ+ and Religion”. As the word and idea of LGBTIQ+ has become more familiar to many people, this program focused on the situation in which people belonging to sexual minorities are placed in, and how they have been received in the context of religion, especially in the Christian communities of Japan and Korea as well as within the Bible.

In the keynote speech, Dr. Yuri Horie, spokesperson of Ecumenical Community for Queer Activism (ECQA), remarked that what we can learn from the Bible is not to be complicit with oppression and discrimination against sexual minorities, but to stand against the norm and keep raising “noises”.

As participants from both Korea and Japan researched and presented the situations in their own communities and countries to each other, they reported that neither country has laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexuality or systems that allow same-sex couples to legally be married, and that there are discriminatory movements that exclude transgender people in both countries. In contrast, it was also a time for learning about civil actions that give a sense of hope.

In the final session, the participants discussed what they, Japanese and Korean youth, can do to resist discrimination against people belonging to sexual minorities. Participants from Japan confirmed that they would disseminate information via social media for the purpose of raising awareness, and a social media campaign took place from December 2021 to March 2022.

This 3-month program was planned and managed by committee members, mainly consisting of youth and young women. The diverse team of young people, including those who participated for the first time this year as well as those who have been participating for years and have made the Japan-Korea Youth Conference a larger and richer program, worked hard together to explore ways to improve the program within the limits of an online event.



Participants gathered online



Voice from a participant

My dream is to be a little trigger for a big step for humanity to change in regards to the issue of discrimination. This resolution became even firmer, thanks to the Japan-Korea Youth Conference that melted my stubborn value system. I am very thankful for this experience.

Discussions were conducted using “miro,” an online tool that allows each person to write directly on a shared board

Activities for a Peaceful World

Assuming an Anti-Nuclear Stance and Putting the Idea into Action

The "Pilgrimage to Hiroshima" is a 3-day/2-night program (4-day/3-night with optional tours) held in Hiroshima to learn about the importance of peace and to create a peaceful world so that the tragedy caused by nuclear weapons will never be repeated. Although we were unable to conduct the trip there due to the spread of the virus, The Pilgrimage to a peaceful world, which began in 1971, celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2021.

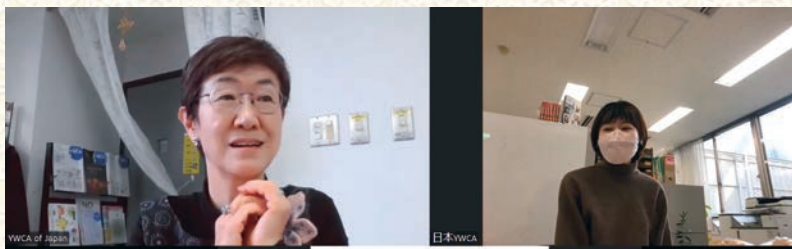
Pilgrimage to Hiroshima: Beyond 50 Years of Progress

Under the COVID-19 pandemic, which still shows no sign of being contained, we launched the "Pilgrimage to Hiroshima 50th Anniversary Website" on August 6, 2020, and youth volunteers continued their online activities through 2021.

In an effort to learn about the 50 years history of the program, the young volunteers researched and verbalized the history from various perspectives, and also interviewed people who have been involved in the "Pilgrimage to Hiroshima" in the past. The reports from the interviews will be available on the YWCA of Japan website in the future.



Top: 50th anniversary website
Bottom: Interviews led by youths



Voice from a committee member

Going through documents and resources, I strongly felt that reading is not enough to learn the reality of the damages of the Atomic Bomb or the atmosphere of the city before and after the bombing.

With the help of the efforts and skills of those who are willing to pass on their experiences, and fully utilizing my imagination, I hope to learn one by one the things that are now not easy to see, such as the lives of the people at that time, and what happened there.

(From the 50 years anniversary website of Pilgrimage to Hiroshima)

Election Initiatives

In 2021, a national election for the House of Representatives took place in Japan. In order to realize a society in which every individual is valued, there is a need for political change. The committee members of the YWCA of Japan in charge of peace and anti-nuclear action have discussed themes such as "what elections are", "what it means to vote", and "how to engage people, not limited to young people, to be interested in elections", and shared their ideas through social networking services and print media. The YWCA of Japan will continue to deliver effective outreach in the lead up to the coming national elections.



Special infographic for election

Support for Survivors of the Great East Japan Earthquake

The YWCA of Japan's support activities for the survivors of the Great East Japan Earthquake are planned and operated with the determination to continue supporting children born on the day of the disaster, until they become 20 years old.

YWCA Activity Space "Caro Fukushima"

Total number of users: 432

Providing Safe Space for Women and Children Needed Amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic

"Caro" means "dear" or "precious" in Italian. Established in November 2012 in Fukushima City as a hub for YWCA operations to support the survivors of the Great East Japan Earthquake, Caro Fukushima performs a variety of activities aimed at supporting women and children living in Fukushima, relieving their anxieties and stress of life after the great earthquake and the high dose of radiation, and serving as a Safe Space for talking, gathering and learning without any worries.

"Study in Caro", a study support program for elementary and junior high school students, entered its second year, and in December, a "Christmas Exchange Party" was held for the first time between participants and instructors. At the "Talking Session" events to convey the current situation in Fukushima, graduate students and high school students were invited as topic presenters to offer new perspectives and themes. The "Talking Session" series was a unique online event that also included a discussion of issues surrounding the Tokyo Olympics and Fukushima as viewed by a journalist living in Germany.

- "Talking Session" at Caro Fukushima (online, held three times)
- Donation of storybooks to childcare centers that were flooded by Typhoon Hagibis in 2019.
- Other activities including providing venues to "Pastel Shine Art" classes and groups conducting recuperation programs.



Left: Peace Messengers speaking from Hiroshima and Fukushima, during an online Talking Session: "Message for Peace from Me in Fukushima - Through the Activities of Hiroshima Nagasaki Peace Messengers" (November 27, 2021)
Right: Picture book donation volunteers

Voice of a Participant

I always look forward to the study session, two times every month. Schoolwork has become more challenging after entering junior high school, but the tutors are helping me with the parts where I'm struggling. Even when my progress is slow, they teach me until I understand. I am now a little more confident with my least favorite subjects.

"Refresh" Recuperation Program

Number of programs implemented in the year 2021: 3

Enabling Peace of Mind for the Future

The "Refresh" recuperation programs, organized by local YWCAs around Japan and managed together by their members and volunteers, are a program for children, who are mainly residents of Fukushima Prefecture, enabling them to refresh their minds and bodies by staying in safe and secure places outside areas affected by radiation. Many beneficiaries have participated multiple times, and are looking forward to participating every year.

During the year 2021, COVID-19 largely impacted the implementation of the program; still, each local YWCA made creative efforts and implemented a variety of programs, including an online reunion and a talking session to discuss the current situation in Fukushima.

Second House Program

A Relaxing "Another Home" for Families

The Second House Program is a recuperation program for families, groups, and single women living in Fukushima Prefecture and areas with high radiation levels, offering free stays in houses outside the prefecture where they can relax and feel at home. While the Second House program was able to continue its operation for the year 2021 with the will to "always be waiting for you" as a safe space and thanks to the generous cooperation of the house owners who have provided the houses free of charge, many people refrained from participating due to the impact of COVID-19.

The Second House program continues its operation with the cooperation of many people, including the home owners, the local YWCAs, and neighborhood volunteers.

Network and Training Programs within Japan

Creating a Network of Mutual Learning and Growth through the COVID-19 Pandemic

One of the strengths of the YWCA of Japan is its diverse activities that respond to the features of each local community, as well as its network that allows people to connect and learn from each other, sometimes beyond their own regions and localities.

In the year 2021, in the midst of the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak, the YWCA of Japan supported nationwide networking and training activities through the following online-based programs.

▶ Virtual Visits to Local YWCAs

From Hokkaido in the north to Okinawa in the south, some YWCAs have large buildings, while others have a few members who gather at churches, local community centers, or members' homes. The project introduces unique activities in each local YWCA through online "visits" by fellow YWCA members in different parts of Japan.

In the year 2021, visits to eight YWCAs have been conducted, reports of which can be read on the YWCA of Japan website.



Left: YWCA Virtual Visit to Fukuoka YWCA
Right: Introduction of Sendai YWCA activities

▶ Workshop for Board Members

The YWCA of Japan conducted participatory workshops targeting board members, who play a central role in each local YWCA. The interactive workshops allow participants to brush up their meeting management skills while finding each other's strengths, in order to facilitate meetings that generate exciting activities, as well as meetings where everyone's opinions are heard.

▶ Training Course for Supporters of Young Women

A total of five online courses were conducted to provide training as facilitators and youth supporters, whose work is key to empowerment projects for young women. A total of 171 people participated in the program.

▶ Core Youth Gathering

9th May 2021, 18 participants/ 13th February 2022, 16 participants

The event was held online as a place for youth who embody "young women's leadership" and play a central role in local YWCAs all over Japan, either as committee members or staff members, to share their issues and concerns in their positions, support each other, and generate energy to change society through solidarity.

▶ Gathering of Local YWCA Presidents/ Local YWCA Activity Exchange Meeting on Gender



The meetings were held in May, in conjunction with the annual "Affiliated YWCAs Central Committee Meeting" where local YWCA representatives from across Japan assemble.

In addition to introducing activities being conducted in their local communities, participants at the "Activity Exchange Meeting" discussed their concerns and ideas for addressing gender-related issues in their own communities.

Flyer for Activity Exchange Meeting on Gender

International Solidarity and Advocacy

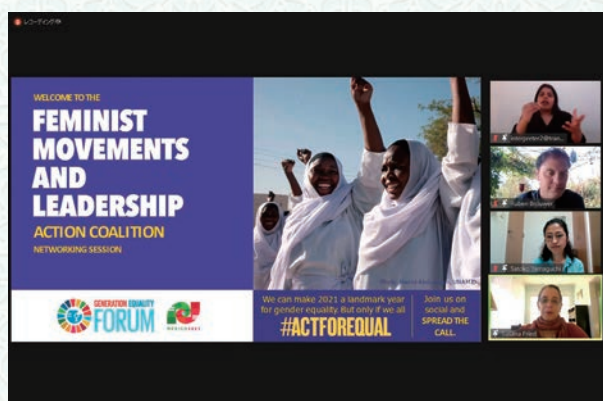
Participation in the Generation Equality Forum and Signing on to the Compact on Women, Peace, Security and Humanitarian Action

A Historic Meeting to Build a Gender-Equal Society

The Generation Equality Forum (GEF) is an international conference called by UN Women, the UN agency for gender equality and women's empowerment, and organized by the governments of Mexico and France together with civil society around the world. On the opportunity of the 25th anniversary of the Adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action, the most comprehensive and progressive international framework for women's empowerment, this project was planned and implemented to secure funding and develop a detailed Five-Year Plan for Gender Equality. Approximately 50,000 people from all over the world participated online, including representatives from the YWCA of Japan.

Several "Coalitions" formed through the GEF, consisting of various actors including national governments, international organizations, civil society, corporations, and non-profit organizations, have developed five-year action plans to 2026 for gender equality in their respective fields. The YWCA of Japan has signed on as a member organization of the Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action (WPS-HA) Compact.

A major achievement of the GEF has been the US\$40 billion in funding and the pledge of more than 1,000 action plans, including legislation, by governments and other stakeholders. The Japanese government has also committed to participate in the Action Coalition on Gender-Based Violence and Women, Peace, Security and Humanitarian Action Compact. Over the next five years, the YWCA will continue to follow developments closely and take action together to ensure that the action plans pledged in the GEF are realized.



Left: GEF in Mexico (March 2021)

Right: GEF held in Paris (June-July 2021)

Online International Events

Following 2020, as face-to-face interaction became more difficult, a number of international events and conferences were conducted online as a new method of international exchange. The World YWCA held several "Dialogues" open to the broad participation of YWCA members in different countries, and led discussions on international advocacy, membership, and the World Council scheduled for 2023. Members of the YWCA of Japan participated and gave reports about their activities for peace at the World YWCA Panel Discussion on Peace, Conflict, and Justice in July, a webinar co-hosted with the YWCA of India and the YWCA of Bangladesh on the International Day of Peace in September, and an international seminar on "Peace in Asia and the Role of Women" held in Korea and online in November.

Panel Discussion hosted by World YWCA

Solidarity & Support for Palestine

In May 2021, military attacks by Israel on the Gaza Strip in Palestine caused the loss of many lives including children, destroyed infrastructure and livelihoods, and left more than 70,000 people displaced. In order to respond to this situation, the YWCA of Japan, in cooperation with the YWCA of Palestine, implemented the following programs.

- In May 2021, we launched an online petition campaign calling on the Japanese Government to speak out against Israel's forced eviction in Sheikh Jarrah and military attacks on Gaza (total number of signatures on June 14, 2021: 6,200). Signatures were submitted to the Japanese Government through an online meeting with the First Middle East Division, Middle Eastern and African Affairs Bureau, of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- On Saturday, June 26, we hosted a webinar in collaboration with the YWCA of Palestine to share reports from Palestine and to call for support.
- From August 11 (Wed.) to September 15 (Wed.), we organized a crowdfunding campaign to provide mental support for children in Gaza Strip by implementing an after-school program. With the donation of 1,238,500 JPY from 193 people, from October 24 to October 28, 2021, 100 girls from 4th to 10th grades in two locations in the Gaza Strip were able to participate in the program including sports, music, "Art Therapy" aiming to encourage healing through colors with the support of specialists, "Story Therapy" aiming to provide mental support through speaking out their hearts in their own words, as well as a trip in Gaza City to provide children who have experienced air strikes with a chance to relax. The program was implemented through Juzoor for Health and Social Development, a local partner organization, with cooperation from the YWCA of Palestine.
- On Monday, November 29, The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, we conducted a webinar in collaboration with the YWCA of Palestine, to share reports from the above crowdfunding project. Speakers from Palestine introduced voices of the children in Gaza who benefited from the project, and talked about how important it is for children to have support from people overseas, such as Japan, so that they can continue to live without losing hope among the daily hardships under the military blockade and the shock of the air strikes.

The YWCA of Japan also supports the "Olive Tree Campaign" (conducted by JAI, a joint project of the YWCA of Palestine and East Jerusalem YWCA), which enables people from all over the world to participate by donating olive trees on Palestinian land threatened by the Israeli military and settlers. In 2021, the YWCA of Japan sent donation to plant 292 olive trees.

In addition, the YWCA of Japan also supports the YWCA of Palestine's empowerment projects for women and children in refugee camps and kindergarten management.



Top left: Program for children in Gaza funded through the Crowdfunding campaign

Top right: A young woman in Gaza sharing her experience of the airstrikes

Bottom left: Webinar on International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

Overseas Emergency Support-Disaster Support -through YWCA's international network

The YWCA of Japan, in cooperation with YWCAs overseas, conducts emergency relief activities by raising funds and supporting the activities of YWCAs in the affected areas in the event of a disaster. In 2021, in the aftermath of a volcano eruption in Tonga, we delivered support to a women's organization in Tonga through a coalition of NGOs, of which the YWCA of Papua New Guinea, the YWCA of Solomon Islands and the YWCA of Samoa are also members.



Tonga: Caring for children in an evacuation center



Tonga: Relief supplies

Statements and Endorsements

- Statement: We oppose the discharge of radioactive contaminated water from TEPCO's Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant into the ocean and call for its withdrawal! (April 21)
- Call to stop the forced eviction in Sheikh Jarrah and military attacks by Israel and online petition campaign (May 14)
- Call for "Repeal of the Bill on Review and Regulation of the Use of Real Estate Surrounding Important Facilities and on Remote Territorial Islands" (May 31)
- Statement on "Respect for Human Rights of People Belonging to Sexual Minorities, Including LGBTIQ" (June 1)
- Endorsed the Korea Peace Appeal Campaign (July 29)
- Endorsed the Open letter from Japanese organizations and individuals urging Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga and other Japanese party leaders not to oppose the Biden administration's declaration of no first use, sole purpose (September 3)
- Written Statement to the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW66) (October 15)
- Statement: "Don't Nuke the Climate - Don't use nuclear power to fight global warming - COP26" (October 17)
- Endorsed "Utoro Solidarity Statement on Eradicating Hate Crimes" (December 24)
- Endorsed a letter to the European Commission: "Nuclear energy that is neither "sustainable" nor "green" should not be included in the EU taxonomy" (January 11, 2022)
- Statement by the YWCA of Japan on Russia's invasion of Ukraine (February 28, 2022)

Donation Report

Donation Received

YWCA of Japan supporters fee	¥1,595,000
“Peacemakers” donation (Including 1,033,776 JPY for Future Generations Empowerment)	¥3,878,169
Great East Japan Earthquake Survivor Support (Including 619,000 JPY from Caro Fukushima Supporters)	¥2,283,005
Disaster Relief Donations (Including disaster response within and outside Japan, Support for the YWCA of Palestine, donation for Ukraine and Tonga)	¥1,731,430
Olive Tree Campaign	¥868,000
Crowdfunding for Gaza children	¥1,261,500
Total	¥11,617,104

Thank you so much for your generous donation during the year 2021-22.
The YWCA of Japan is resolved to continue to support women’s proactive initiatives towards a peaceful society where everyone is respected.
We ask from our hearts for your continued support.

Chair of Board of Trustees, Ritsuko Mibae
President, Satoko Fujitani



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Blessed Are the Peacemakers

-Matthew 5.9-