

Annual Report 2023



Youths from Japan and Korea explored the idea of "Peace" together



Workshop: Envisioning the future



Feature Report



21st Korea-Japan Youth Conference

19 youths gathered in Seoul to discuss "Women, Peace and Security" together.



Field trip in Seoul!

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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21st Korea-Japan Youth Conference

“Let Us Become Peacemakers!” Thinking of Women-Peace-Security

The YWCA of Japan and the National YWCA of Korea have jointly organized the “Korea-Japan Youth Conference” since 1993. Following is the report of the program aiming for youth leadership and grassroots peace-building.

For 3 days from 13th to 15th February 2024, the 21st Korea-Japan Youth Conference was held in Seoul with the participation of 19 young people.

On the first day, the participants listened to a lecture on “Women, Peace and Security” and conflicts around feminism and gender issues in Japan and Korea. In the end of the day, they shared a time to socialize over crafting traditional Japanese game cards and dancing.

On the second day, the participants visited the “War and Women’s Human Rights Museum” to listen to testimonies of women who were forced to serve as Japanese military “comfort women” during the Japanese invasion, and then participated in a “Wednesday Demonstration” demanding Japan to redress the “Comfort Women” issue. They also listened to a lecture on women’s political participation and WPS, and gained knowledge about the importance of women’s roles in the peacebuilding process. In the end of the second day, they explored the streets of Myeong-dong in small groups, forming bonds through enjoying street food and shopping together.

On the final day, participants exchanged reports on youth activities in Korea and Japan, and listened to a special lecture by an environmental activist about the importance of youth-led social movements and mutual care in the community. Finally, an “Action Plan” was prepared and presented for future solidarity and peace activities between both YWCAs. The next conference will be held in Japan in 2025.

*The Korea-Japan Youth Conference is supported by donations to Peacemakers Fund.



Participants of Korea-Japan Youth Conference



Group photo on the final day

Leadership Training for Young Women

68th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68)

10-16th March 2024

@New York

Seven young women attended the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68) held at UN Headquarters in New York, as delegates from the YWCA of Japan.

The participants hosted their own event, about the hardships young women in Japan face in their daily lives. The event was a great success, with an audience overflowing the seats in the 40-person capacity room. The life stories of the young women moved the hearts of the listeners, forming a supportive atmosphere in the room. The event was a wonderful fusion of the personalities, experiences, and voices of the seven participants.

Please see the Column Article for more.



In front of the United Nations building



Participants in Yokohama YWCA

Seminar: Let's Become "RiseUp!" Facilitators!

10th December 2023 @Yokohama YWCA

14th January 2024 @Fukuoka YWCA

Total number of participants: 15

This course is designed for people who have opportunities to "facilitate" in all kinds of settings, such as schools, workplaces, and hobby activities. The course provided an opportunity to exercise facilitation focusing on YWCA leadership methods and the of creation of a safe and secure space for oneself and others that values "the way I am" rather than "the way it should be".

Study Session “Encountering Korean Feminism - For Future Solidarity”

30th September 2023 @Online / Participants: 15

The Youth Gender Subcommittee hosted the session, inviting Ms. Choi Yerin to speak about her encounter with feminism, and about the women’s movement in Korea. They screened a film about women’s human rights directed by Ms. Choi, and conducted discussions in small groups.



“Delivery Lecture” on Gender in Yamanashi

20th March 2024

@Yamanashi Eiwa Junior/Senior High School
Participants: 25

The YWCA of Japan provides “Delivery Lectures”, sending speakers and facilitators to events discussing gender issues. In March 2023, a session was held with the participation of Yamanashi Eiwa Junior & Senior High School YWCA members, youth graduates, and Kofu YWCA members. Ms. Satomi Masui (Nagoya YWCA) led a workshop titled “Thinking about ‘consent’ from a gender perspective”. Participants commented that they were glad to be able to think about the topic at a deeper level and discuss it with others.

Top: A scene from the workshop

Bottom: A participant writing out her ideas about gender

Junior and Senior High School YWCA Activities

In the summer of 2023, Junior and High school YWCAs held District Conferences in their respective areas: Kansai District (theme: Love and Service, 86 participants) from July 28th to 30th, Tohoku and Hokkaido District (theme: Peace, 16 participants) from July 31st to August 2nd, and Kanto District (theme: For a World Where Everyone Can Feel Safe and Smile, 63 participants) on August 4th. All the conferences were held in person for the first time in a long time, and the participants shared the joy of meeting each other and deepened understandings according to each theme.



Activities for a Peaceful World

11th Korea-Japan YWCA Conference

7-10th July 2023 @Seoul / Participants: 26

Theme: Women's Roles in Peace in East Asia

Purpose: Strengthening of solidarity between YWCAs in Japan and Korea, Discussion on WPS (Women, Peace and Security), Release of joint statement

The "Korea-Japan YWCA Conference," a gathering of representatives from the YWCA of Japan and the National YWCA of Korea, was held under the same theme as the Korea-Japan Youth Conference held in the same year: "Women, Peace, and Security (WPS)". In addition to reports on the activities of each YWCA and exchange of opinions, participants visited Tieluan County, located in the DMZ (demilitarized zone near the 38th parallel of north latitude), and felt the pain and thought about peace in the face of the reality of the division between the North and South. On the last day, they released a statement "We oppose the Discharge of Contaminated Water from TEPCO's Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant Accident into the Ocean" and held a press conference for the local media. After four stimulating days inspired by the power of the National YWCA of Korea to push the movement forward, the YWCA of Japan is committed to work for even more active collaboration between the YWCA of Japan and Korea.



Posing with the sign "W" for Women

Discussion between Youths in Japan and Korea about "Treated Contaminated Water"

19th January 2024 @Online

Participants: 28 (Including 4 youths from Japan and 7 youths from Korea)

This initiative was aimed for dialogue on the issue of "treated contaminated water" that the Japanese government has started to release in the ocean in 2023. With the help of an interpreter, the participants from Japan and Korea were able to communicate and listen to each other's thoughts and ideas, while becoming aware of the existence of gaps in knowledge, awareness, and enthusiasm for the movement regarding this issue among the participants from both countries. It was a valuable time for the participants to learn some backgrounds of why so many differences arise, through interactive dialogue. One participant from the National YWCA of Korea shared that she felt an even stronger need to continue holding such discussions, after she realized that there is a bigger gap between the situations in Japan and Korea than she had formerly imagined.

Support Activities 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. 2023 was another year of efforts to provide support for the future, while facing the challenges that arise every day.



Activities at Caro Fukushima



Distributing food at Food Pantry activity

YWCA Activity Space "Caro Fukushima"

Total number of users: 598

Seeking Out the Light from the Cracks, in the Days after the Earthquake and Nuclear Power Plant Accident

Caro Fukushima, as a base of activities to support survivors of the Great East Japan Earthquake, works with the daily issues of the residents, mostly women and children living in Fukushima Prefecture and their concerns and worries due to radiation levels. 2023 was a year in which we had to face the issue of "treated contaminated water" being released into the ocean. Three "Talking Sessions" were held during the year, where speakers introduced Fukushima as something we should not forget, from the viewpoint of a local resident.

At the same time, new activities were launched, such as working with university students who were children at the time of the disaster, in order to create a safe space for children and youth, and providing livelihood support activities such as food pantry. These activities were only possible because of the "Caro Fukushima" Supporters and the donations for the survivors of the Great East Japan Earthquake.

"Refresh" Recuperation Program: Backing the Survivor Support Programs in Local YWCAs

Number of programs during 2023: 2

The YWCA of Japan continued providing aid in the form of assisting local YWCAs' programs supporting survivors of the disaster. During the reporting period, Sendai YWCA hosted a screening of the film "The Chief Justice Who Stopped the Nuclear Power Plant and the Farmers Who are Stopping the Nuclear Power Plant" and Kobe YWCA held a total of three online lectures on the theme of "Understanding Fukushima Today".

Second House Program: Another Home for Families to Relax

Number of users: 5 families, 19 people (10 parents, 9 children)

The Second House Program is a family-size recuperation program for those living in the affected areas, offering free stays for them to relax. Thanks to the generous cooperation of all who supported the program, we were able to successfully continue the program in 2023. In addition, we received an increasing number of new inquiries from potential beneficiaries.

International Solidarity and Advocacy

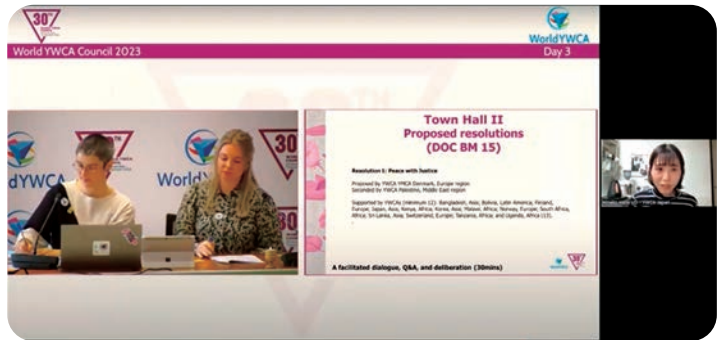
As a member of the World YWCA, active in more than 100 countries around the world, the YWCA of Japan aims for social change through the leadership of young women and girls. We also deliver aid to areas affected by disasters and conflicts through the global network of YWCAs.

30th World YWCA Council

27th November- 1st December 2023
@Online

First-Ever Virtual World YWCA Council

After 126 years since the first World Council in 1898, the World YWCA Council 2023 was held online for the first time. The Council consisted of more than 540 participants, including delegates and observers, from 71 member YWCAs around the world, including 16 from Japan. The Council adopted a strategic framework for the next four years toward the shared goal: "By 2035, 100 million young women and girls will transform power structures to create justice, gender equality and a world without violence and war; leading a sustainable YWCA movement, inclusive of all women.". Calls for action were also adopted on various challenges faced in the world.



A delegate from the YWCA of Japan speaking in the World Council session



Solidarity & Support for Palestine

The YWCA of Japan has been supporting women and children living under conflict through donations to the YWCA of Palestine (see p. 8 for details). After the beginning of the massive Israeli attack on Gaza in October 2023, we issued statements and advocacy documents, and in December 2023, called for a nationwide Silent Appeal for an immediate ceasefire in order to make our message as visible as possible.

"Silent Appeal" action in various parts of Japan

Support for Ukraine

The YWCA of Ukraine supports women and children facing difficulties due to the Russian invasion, especially internally displaced families in need with infants and newborns. In addition to material support, the YWCA provides medical assistance to women who are suffering from war trauma, illness, and other difficulties. The YWCA of Japan supports these activities through donations.

An internally displaced family who received aid materials through YWCA of Ukraine



Japanese Translations for World YWCA Publications

The World YWCA publishes books that serve as tools for leadership training of young women. With the help of volunteers, the YWCA of Japan published the below documents in Japanese language.



RiseUp! Guide for Young Women's Transformative Leadership



Inspiring Leaders Aspiring Action



The World YWCA's Young Women-Led Feminist Consultation Methodology Guide

Japanese versions can be downloaded or purchased on the YWCA of Japan website.



Statements and Endorsements

Endorsed: "Joint Statement of Churches Protesting Revision of the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act and Living with Refugees and Migrants" (6/30)

Statement: "We Oppose the Discharge of 'ALPS Treated Water' into the Ocean and Call for a Democratic and Sincere Dialogue" (8/22)

Endorsed: "We Call for Humanitarian Special Permission for Residence for Immigrants with Irregular Residence Status" (8/23)

Statement: "Call for immediate Stop of All Violence and Occupation of Palestine" (10/11)

Endorsed: "Request from Japanese NGOs to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: We Call for Action to Secure an Immediate Ceasefire between Israel and Palestine" (10/13)

Letter of Request: "We Ask for Journalism that will Stop the Genocide Taking Place in Gaza!" (10/22)

Letter: "Protest against the Remarks by Deputy Prime Minister Taro Aso on January 28, 2024" (2/3)

Endorsed: "We call for the Japanese Government to Withdraw its Temporary Suspension of Funding to UNRWA" (2/5)

Statement: "We call for an Immediate Stop to the Attacks on Rafah and Gaza, and a Permanent Ceasefire" (2/16)

Endorsed: "The IAEA's nuclear fairy tales are leading nations and all of us into climate catastrophe. What we need is: Safe, affordable and climate-friendly energy for all." (3/14)

Reflections from CSW Participants

During their participation in CSW, in addition to hosting their own event, the delegates from the YWCA of Japan have the opportunity to observe UN plenary sessions, attend events organized by YWCAs, women's organizations from different countries and UN agencies, and much more. This page features some of their experiences.

“ I feel that our parallel event was a great success. First, each of the youth members had an opportunity to convey our own beliefs and messages in the presentations. Secondly, although the time schedule was tight, we were able to accomplish the event just as we had rehearsed. Also, each of the discussion groups included a good balance of diverse participants, and was able to engage in a vibrant interactive discussion.

The members of the delegation for this year were diverse in age and background. We shared heated discussions every day and were able to further deepen our learning. I am very happy to have met such wonderful members who are honest, passionate and ambitious. (A.K.: Tokyo YWCA) ”



Group photo with participants after the parallel event

“ I had the rare opportunity to attend an event hosted by the YWCA of Palestine, and to gain a better understanding of the current situation in Palestine.



Attending the CSW opening plenary session in the United Nations building

At the event, the harsh realities faced by the Palestinian people were vividly described. It was particularly shocking to hear the experience of a participant who lost close family members when their church in Gaza was bombed. I was left speechless by this tragic event, where a place of worship that should be expected to be peaceful became the target of military attack and the lives of beloved family members were taken so violently.

We may be limited in what we can do, but I believe that sharing the situation in Palestine with as many people as possible and deepening their understanding will be the first step toward peace. (Y.S.: Tokyo YWCA) ”

*Young women's participation to CSW is supported by donations to Peacemakers Fund.

Deep Dive into the Donation Campaigns for Palestine

YWCA of Palestine began its activities in 1893 and has since been working for the empowerment of women and the realization of peace. The YWCA of Japan has been involved in supporting the YWCA of Palestine since the 1990s and has connected to Palestine in various ways.

● Supporting the Kindergartens in Refugee Camps

In 1948, more than 500 villages were destroyed and occupied by Zionist military forces, more than 10,000 people were killed, and the State of Israel was founded on the stolen land. Even now, Palestinians who became refugees are unable to return to their homeland, and many have lived in refugee camps for several generations. To support the children's physical and mental wellbeing, the YWCA of Palestine operates kindergartens in the refugee camps of Aqbet Jaber (Jericho) and Jalazone (Ramallah), creating a place where children living under military occupation can learn creatively, grow up healthy, and develop confidence.



Kindergarten children in the refugee camps

● Olive Tree Campaign

The Joint Advocacy Initiative (JAI), a joint project of the YWCA of Palestine and the YMCA of East Jerusalem, is implementing the "Olive Tree Campaign" which delivers olive trees to farmers in the West Bank. This program encourages job creation, environmental protection, and stabilization of the livelihood of the Palestinian people, through olive trees that are deeply rooted in Palestinian lives. Even during the difficult time since October 2023, they have continued planting olive trees and kept hope alive.

For every 3,000 yen donated, one olive tree sapling is delivered to Palestine. Donations collected through YWCA of Japan in 2023 has amounted to 309 olive trees in 2023.



A woman from Nablus. She was able to plant 50 olive trees in her farm which was formerly destroyed by settlers.

Donation Report

Thank you so much for your generous donation during the year 2023-24. The YWCA of Japan is resolved to continue to support women's proactive initiatives towards a peaceful society where everyone is respected.

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

Donation Received

Peacemakers Fund	¥1,885,877	For leadership training, aimed to empower young women to create peace.
Peace Education Donation	¥150,000	For peace education programs including Pilgrimage to Hiroshima.
Support for Survivors of the Great East Japan Earthquake	¥916,615	For activities to support women and children in the disaster-affected areas.
Caro Fukushima supporter	¥497,500	For supporting Caro Fukushima, one of the projects supporting Great East Japan Earthquake survivors.
YWCA of Japan supporter	¥1,464,500	For supporting the overall movement of the YWCA of Japan.
Emergency Disaster Response	¥806,408	For domestic and international disaster relief programs.
JAI Olive Tree Campaign	¥918,000	For a donation of 3,000 JPY, one olive tree will be planted in Palestine. Donors will receive a certificate and a signboard with their names will be placed at the tree-planting site.
Support for YWCA of Palestine Refugee Camp	¥1,689,042	The funds will be used to support kindergartens run by the YWCA of Palestine in refugee camps.
Support for Ukraine	¥1,069,638	The funds will be used for financial and mental support for women and children in Ukraine.
Support for Burma/Myanmar	¥184,834	Supporting civil actions for peace in Burma/Myanmar.
Support for survivors of 2024 Noto Earthquake	¥670,404	The donations were sent to Act Japan Forum and YMCA Japan, which engaged in disaster response work in the affected area.

Total ¥10,252,818

Scan to donate to
YWCA of Japan



Participants of Korea-Japan
Youth Conference at Wednesday
Demonstration in Seoul



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