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Editorial

Four Stories

Magdalena almost lost hope of becoming a citizen of her father's country. But she finally realized her dream after decades of uncertainty. Lavinia sells vegetables and fruits harvested in her farm. With additional skill of processing her produce to increase their value, she earns more for the family. Ruksana and her family barely survive by making garments at home. With government ration for poor families like hers being limited to rice and wheat, other needs have to be bought.

Stella finds solace in writing poems to express her thoughts and feelings as a person with a disability. Her poems are messages embodying the hope of people with disabilities to be treated as equals and with respect by others.

These women have to empower themselves in one form or another to face their difficulties. Lavinia and Ruksana have to work hard to support their families. Stella had to develop her literary skill to promote respect for people with disabilities. Nanay Magdalena had to endure raising her children alone.

These are stories of enduring hardship and overcoming barriers. These stories represent those who have to struggle to live in dignity and gain respect for their rights.

These are stories of women.

“Returning Home” - Story of Nanay Magdalena

Magdalena Akagishi

My name is Magdalena Akagishi and my father is Toraiichi Akagishi, a Japanese. My father first came to Manila and then to Santa Barbara town in Iloilo province. My father was a handyman and also a businessperson. In Iloilo, my father supervised a group of carpenters in constructing a prison building. He worked with a few other Japanese including Jose Hatakeyama, who was married to a Filipina, “Kodaira” and “Miyahira.”

My mother, Olympia, met my father in Santa Barbara. My mother's father was a goldsmith and palm wine producer, and my mother sold palm wine and food. My father married my mother when she was fifteen years old on 16 August 1910 at the Catholic Church in Lucena town. My father adopted Mariano as his first name, likely a name he was given when he was baptized as a Catholic before marrying my mother.

I have six siblings: Concepcion (Michiko), Vicente (Masao), Latgarda (Sitomi), Salvacion, Dolores, and Jose.

My father spoke Ilonggo, and so we spoke it at home. But I learned from him how to say things in Japanese, “mizu kudasai,” “konnichiwa,” “genki desuka,” “sayonara,” and so on.

In 1939, my mother passed away due to illness. I was eight

years old then. After she passed away, my father took care of us. My father would eat raw fish, *sukiyaki* on a stove on the table, *miso* (soybean paste) and tofu at home. He was a kind man who never scolded his children.

During the War

The war broke out when I was eleven years old, in Grade 5 of primary school. My father was sent to prison. But when the Japanese army landed in Iloilo, my father returned home. He left again that same day to serve in the Japanese army, taking with him my youngest brother, Jose. A few weeks later, my brother Vicente followed my father in the Japanese army, and my sister Latgarda, who spoke Japanese and Ilonggo, was assigned to work as an interpreter of the Japanese army. I did not know where my oldest sister Concepcion went. She who was already married at that time.

I and my sisters Salvacion and Dolores stayed home with our



sick grandmother (my mother died before the war in 1939). My father came home one day wearing a military uniform with the rank of Lieutenant. My brother Vicente visited us every week and brought us food. However, the Filipino guerrillas who opposed the Japanese military became more active, and we lost contact with my brother. Our house was burned down later.

I and my two sisters (Salvacion and Dolores) were detained by the Filipino guerillas and made to work in a plantation in the

mountains of the neighboring province of Capiz.

Life after the War

When the war ended, I returned to our hometown not knowing what happened to my father and other siblings. My sister Latgarda told us that the Japanese garrison was bombed and my father was unable to walk because of dysentery and died during the bombing.

My three siblings (Concepcion, Vicente and Latgarda) were considered Japanese and subsequently “repatriated” to Japan. Latgarda got married to another second generation Japanese (*nikkeijin*), Demetrio Kunimitsu, who she met on the ship that brought them to Japan.

I was sent to live with my mother's cousin and returned to primary school in New Lucena in Iloilo City. After graduating from primary school, I was sent to study in a secondary school in Manila, where I lived with a relative in San Miguel district and worked as a domestic help. Contrary to what I heard, I was not allowed to go to school. I went to a vocational school to learn secretarial work and typing, but only for a month. I was not treated well.

I had a daughter with a man from Haniwai town in Iloilo province. We left Manila and lived with his parents in Haniwai town, but they hated me and treated me harshly because I was a Japanese.

My common-law husband, went back to Manila and left me and our daughter in Haniwai. His parents later told us to leave the house.

I bore three more children with another man. Around 1956, I went back to Manila with my children and became a live-in housekeeper. I raised my four children alone while working as a domestic help.

In 1959, I went to the Japanese Embassy in Manila to consult about my father and siblings who were sent to Japan.

Sometime later I received a letter from the embassy with the address of my sister Latgarda in Japan.

I corresponded with my sister Latgarda. In 1976, my brother Vicente (Masao) and my sister Latgarda (Sitomi) came home for a visit.

“Returning” to Japan

My sister Salvacion was able to visit Japan in 1991 and met Freddie Kunimitsu, son of Latgarda, and Ramon Akagishi, son of Vicente, and visited the grave of my sister Concepcion.

I was able to visit Japan for the first time in 2006 with my daughter, who decided to reside in Japan.

I met my sister Largarda in Yokohama. But sadly I lost communication with my brother and sister in Japan after that meeting.

I wanted to go back to Japan. But when I applied in 2011 to renew my Philippine passport, the Department of Foreign Affairs in Manila refused to issue a new Philippine passport. I was told that I could not have a

Philippine passport because my father was a Japanese.

Since the Philippine government considered me a Japanese, why can Japanese government not listen to my plea to recognize me as a Japanese descendant and give me a chance to visit my father’s birthplace, Yamaguchi-ken, and also meet again my brother and sister in Japan before my eyes closed? I just had no idea what to do.

In 2022, an opportunity suddenly came. One of my nieces living in Japan contacted a Japanese non-profit organization that was helping war-displaced Japanese descendants recover their Japanese nationality and sought help for my case. This was the Philippine Nikkeijin Legal Support Center (PNLSC) based in Tokyo.

I was also able to know the Cebu Nikkei-jin Kai Inc, (CNJK), the nearest nikkei-jin association I could contact in



the Philippines, which also helped me in gathering documents.

PNLSC and CNJK worked for almost a year preparing a court petition to add my name in the family registry of my father. The petition was filed in the Yamaguchi family court in May 2023. The court approved the petition in July 2023, three months later!

Final Words

The legacy of my late father, Toraichi Akagashi, paved the

way for my family to have an equal opportunity to live and work in Japan.

Being the only surviving child of Toraichi Akagishi in the Philippines, I have always felt a deep connection to Japan and its rich culture. The approval of my petition did not only bring immense joy but also a sense of fulfillment knowing that I will soon be able to celebrate my forthcoming birthday in the land of the Rising Sun. It is indeed a dream come true for me and my family.

I eagerly anticipate this momentous occasion.

For more information, please contact: Philippine Nikkeijin Legal Support Center (PNLSC), Rm. 602, Sobi Building, 7banchi, 1-chome, Yotsuya, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo, Japan, 160-0004; ph (813) 6709-8151; fax (813) 6709-8152; <https://pnlsc.com/>; e-mail: info@pnlsc.com.

Editor’s note:

This is a short note on the possible reason why the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs refused to renew her Philippine passport in 2011. It is likely due to the provisions of the 1987 Constitution on citizenship that relate to the provisions of the 1935 Constitution of the Philippines on Filipino citizenship as stated below:

ARTICLE IV.—CITIZENSHIP

SECTION 1. The following are citizens of the Philippines:

- (3) Those whose fathers are citizens of the Philippines.
- (4) Those whose mothers are citizens of the Philippines and, upon reaching the age of majority, elect Philippine citizenship. (Article IV on Citizenship)

The 1987 Constitution states that people “born before January 17, 1973, of Filipino

mothers, who elect Philippine citizenship upon reaching the age of majority” are Filipino citizens. This reflects the provisions of the 1935 Constitution on Filipino citizenship.

Based on these 1935 Constitution provisions, the Philippine citizenship of a child of non-Filipino father and Filipino mother is acquired if such a child “elected” Philippine citizenship – an action to be done upon reaching the age of majority.

In the case of Magdalena, upon noticing that her father was a Japanese citizen and probably without a proof that she “elected” to become a Filipino citizen when she reached the age of majority, the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs considered her a non-Filipino, or a Japanese citizen.

However, since she had not yet been recognized as a Japanese citizen by the Japanese

government when she applied for renewal of Philippine passport in 2011, she was de facto stateless.

The Yamaguchi family court decision in July 2023 approving her petition to be registered in the family registry of her father provided her with the legal basis to be recognized as a Japanese national.

(See The 1935 Constitution, www.officialgazette.gov.ph/constitutions/the-1935-constitution/?__cf_chl_rt_tk=bWk5jKNfHr3mNedbDaZ9QP5.4J1J5HAt6lPfruRGM-1711938418-0.0.1.1-1685.)

ARTICLE IV, CITIZENSHIP, Section 1, THE 1987 CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES, <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/constitutions/the-1987-constitution-of-the-republic-of-the-philippines/the-1987-constitution-of-the-republic-of-the-philippines-article-iv/>.)

Being a Woman Farmer: A Story from Vanuatu

Vilisi Veibataki *

Lavinia Wilson resides in Natawa, Fanafo, Vanuatu with her family. She is a dedicated wife and mother of four. She supports her husband in managing the day-to-day operations of their farm.

But she also has a farm of her own where she grows different crops including vegetables, root crops and pineapple and sells them in Luganville Municipal Market. She travels every day for an hour to reach the market (when the weather is favorable) to sell her produce. Most of her expenses are on the high cost of transportation, with the return bus fare of 5000 Vatu (US\$40) eating into her already small profit margin. She has been selling in the market for the past eight years.

Pineapple serves as Lavinia's primary source of income, but when the season comes to an end she effortlessly transitions into selling vegetables and root crops. Even during the fruitful pineapple season, she does not let the excess produce go to waste as she generously shares it with her community, a true demonstration of her dedication not just to her family but to her neighbors as well.

Value Addition Training

In October 2023, Lavinia attended a value addition training program in her area. This was the Markets for Change



training program where she learned how to transform her pineapple surplus into jams, chutneys, preserved pineapple pieces, and cordial juice. She saw the training as an opportunity to upskill herself so that she could continue to provide for her family and her community.

The Department of Industry in Vanuatu conducts value addition training to enhance the capacity of growers and producers like Lavinia. The training aims to assist growers and producers in establishing

small-scale processing plants. These plants focus on creating value-added products that are ready for the export market. The Department of Industry collaborates with the Markets for Change Project to conduct these training sessions. The training ensures the farmers learn about techniques for adding value to raw materials or agricultural products. Topics covered include processing, packaging and quality standards. The training greatly benefitted Lavinia as it enhanced her value addition skills, and provided new



knowledge on how to create products with higher market value, and this contributes to economic growth and sustainability in the communities in Vanuatu, as it also empowers local producers and promotes economic development in the rural communities.

Holiday Season Boost

For Lavinia, the holiday season is the most lucrative time of the year, where she sells up to five hundred heads of pineapple, providing a significant financial boost for her family. The success of her business journey has been further enhanced by the knowledge and skills she gained through training programs offered through the Markets for Change Project.

Balancing Family and Business

Juggling family life with her market business is no easy feat. Lavinia begins her day by preparing breakfast and lunch for her four children before attending to her garden. Sometimes, her husband lends a

hand in the farm, and assists with product preparation for the market. This collaborative approach extends to financial management and is a skill she learned from attending the Markets for Change trainings. Lavinia and her husband work together to allocate their earnings, ensuring that family needs are met. Lavinia's trust in her husband is unshakeable.

Collective Decision-Making

In their household, decisions are a shared responsibility. Lavinia believes that for a decision to be sound, both partners must agree. In cases where a decision leads to undesirable outcomes, they acknowledge the collective responsibility and collaborate to find an alternative solution that will directly benefit their family as they are a team.

For now, Lavinia is focusing on completing their family project and the construction of a new concrete house. She mentioned that the income she gains from her market sales is directed to purchasing the house materials.

Empowering rural women is not only key to the wellbeing of individuals, families, rural communities but also to the economic productivity of a nation as women are the largest contributors to the agricultural sector workforce globally.

** This is an expanded excerpt of the report entitled "Empowering Rural Women in Vanuatu Inspires Transformative Change," UNDP Pacific Office, 27 October, 2023, www.undp.org/pacific/stories/empowering-rural-women-vanuatu-inspires-transformative-change.*

Vilisi Veibataki is the Markets for Change (M4C) Project Manager in the UNDP Pacific Office in Fiji.

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Endnote

- 1 This is supported by the Markets for Change (M4C) project, which promotes #genderequality through the economic empowerment of women market vendors in Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. It brings together governments, market vendors and market vendor associations (MVAs), civil society organizations and United Nations agencies. The M4C is implemented by @UNWomen Pacific in partnership with @UNDP_Pacific and the Governments of Australia, Canada, and New Zealand.

Soulful Resistance: A Poetic Journey of a Disabled Female Activist

Ishak Salim and Zakia

Terbuang

*Aku terlahir tanpa pelukan
Rimbun sampah pinggir jalan
Tangis membabi buta
Mencari peraduan
Terbujur kaku*

*Tubuhmu tak ada di sampingku
Meleleh mata membasahi jiwa
Sisa luka untuk anakmu*

*Aku bermunajat di siang malam
Agar kau pulang
Ketuk denyut jantungnya
Gerak langkah kakinya
Tuk surga yang kurindu
Ibu*

Cast Away

I was born without embrace
Amidst the roadside trash
Blind tears
Seeking solace
Lying stiff

Your body not by my side
Tears melting the soul
Remnants of pain for your child

I pray day and night
For your return
The beat of your heart
The steps of your journey
For the heaven I long for
Mama

Stella's poem, "Terbuang," was published in 2019. It describes a daughter's longing for her mother. Along with other poems in the book *Terbuang Tetap Sayang* (Wasted But Still Loved), she expresses her life experiences. Readers of her poems can gain insight into Stella's life. Three years later, she published her second book, *Sajak Sehat* (Healthy Poems).

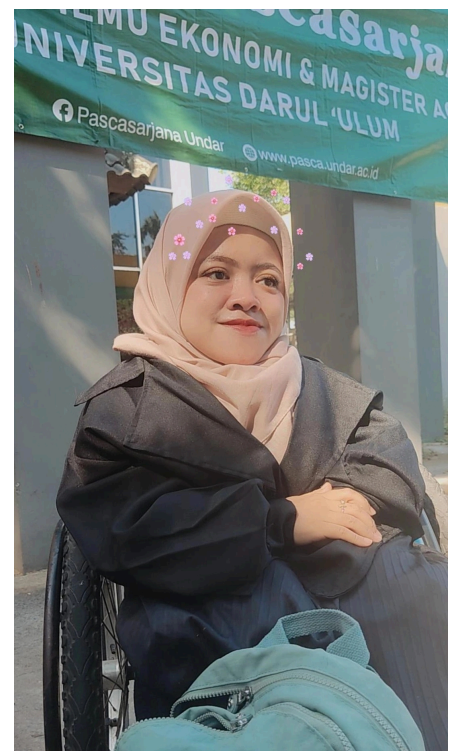
Birth and Growing Up

Stella Rosita Anggraini was born in Jombang, East Java, Indonesia, twenty-nine years ago, as the only child of Mustianah and Sugiono. She was diagnosed with

Osteogenesis Imperfecta (OI), a well-known congenital condition also referred to as Brittle Bone Disorder that causes bones to become soft, fragile and fracture easily.

Stella's parents divorced after she was born. Her mother had difficulty accepting her daughter's medical condition. Since then, Stella lived with her grandparents and father. Though physically disabled, her father worked as a parking attendant at a clothing store in Jombang.

Although she did not grow up with a mother's love, Stella received a lot of love and support from her grandparents. Their experience in raising her



physically disabled father made them adept at caring for Stella with utmost attention. Under their protection, Stella blossomed into a cheerful girl. In her early years, before having a wheelchair, Stella was often carried by her uncle or father. Even when she entered primary school, Stella would be brought to school by her uncle on a bicycle or her father in his wheelchair.

The love she received from her grandparents taught her not to harbor hatred towards her mother as shown in her heartfelt book *Terbuang Tetap Sayang*.

Like many disabled children, Stella faced pressure and intimidation from her classmates. However, she handled the situation patiently. Her patience not only influenced her friends' behavior, but also garnered support for her at school. Not having a wheelchair, the teacher would call her grandfather to come and assist her in using the toilet.

Though facing various obstacles, Stella also received a lot of support that helped her to persevere and navigate her school days. Stella showed strength and determination.

Stella's love for books and reading, especially about fairytales, started to grow from childhood. After her grandparents passed away, Stella lived with Uncle Sugianto, Aunt Suliyati and their children. Her cousins introduced her to the culture of reading. She received books for her birthdays and each time she entered a higher year in school, which made her happy. The stories of Malin Kundang,

Cinderella, and poems by Chairil Anwar were her favorites.

Reading helped Stella overcome many obstacles and strengthened her in pursuing her dream of becoming an author.

After finishing primary school in 2006, Stella continued her studies at the Public Middle School 3 Jombang. Although initially rejected by the teachers, a disability activist named Bahrul Fuad or Cak Fu helped Stella get accepted in the school and continued her studies there. Additionally, the President of the Republic of Indonesia, K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid, gave her a wheelchair. At school, Stella faced different reactions from her teachers and classmates. But the solidarity and support from her friends energized her in facing obstacles in school.

In the second grade of middle school, the teacher organized a system in class that enabled the students to support Stella. This demonstrated the school's commitment to creating an inclusive environment for students with disabilities, like Stella. As a teenager, Stella's love for books, including short stories, poems, and school books continued to grow. Unfortunately, she was unable to continue her studies in senior secondary school due to distance and tuition fees. In 2016, Stella received training from the Bina Daksa Rehabilitation Center in Pasuruan, East Java, where she learned various skills over the course of two years. Despite not attending senior secondary school, her interest in reading remained strong. She enjoyed

reading books borrowed from her friend at the Rehabilitation Center, Uswa.

Poetry Reading and Writing

In a competition among rehabilitation centers held in August 2016, Stella participated in the poetry reading category as a representative of her center. After that, she frequently read poetry at various events, including the 2016 Governor's event in Jombang. It was a playful experience for her. She never forgot to practice and prepare well before her performances. As a result, she was able to showcase her best during the poetry readings.

Two years later, she had the opportunity to enhance her poetry writing skills through "Ayo Inklusif," a training program for youth with disabilities to help improve their employment opportunities. Stella started writing her own poems under the guidance of her mentor. *Terbuang Tetap Sayang* was the result of her one-month writing training in "Ayo Inklusif."

"Writing poetry is the simplest thing I can do in a month-long training" Stella said.

"Writing is healing. Through my writing, I want every woman with disabilities like me to not feel alone. I want them to know that there are many people who feel the same way - the same sadness, the same depression - and they are not alone in facing it," she explained during a phone call.

"Besides being a therapy, writing is also a medium for self-reflection. Writing is a

catharsis between me and the feelings I cannot express," she continued.

Writing was Stella's way of unravelling her thoughts and feelings. She chose writing instead of talking to someone who would pretend to be a good listener. She looks forward to the day when she can speak to others about herself with freedom and without fear.

Poems and Disability Activism

The poems of Stella express her wounds, restlessness, and a spirit of resistance against the stigma of disabilities, as in the poem titled "Wheel:"

*This war is cruel
Striding amidst chaos
Day and night it keeps turning
Wheel amidst uncertainty
Probing the noisy heart
Familiar tones in the ears
Can you, with your wheel
Navigate through life
This slap
Touches me deeply
Just smile
And prove.*

In her second book, her poems begin to reflect Stella's increasingly mature fight against the stigma of disabilities.

Ekawati Liu, an Indonesian Deaf activist, once said, "Many people with disabilities experience wounds throughout their entire lives. They realize that being born with a different physical condition has effects such as excessive sympathy, negative labeling, discriminatory behavior, and often unfulfilled rights."

The wounds of people with disabilities do not heal quickly, and the healing process requires patience and perseverance. Every person with a disability should work on healing their wounds one by one until they feel whole, independent, and brave enough to face reality.

Through her poems, Stella demonstrates her ability to self-reflect and develop the strength to combat ableist practices and support destigmatization. Her goal is to provide herself and others with disabilities with an opportunity to achieve independence and harness their capabilities for the greater good.

Regarding life without stigma, Stella describes it as:

*running fast
not being afraid of falling.*

Life with stigma, on the other hand:

*life is like masquerade
Every eye sees.*

Stella's mindset guides her,

*the world is not a curse
inability to give birth
manipulation of moral
refinement.*

These words express her opposition to mystical and moral-based thinking about the lives of people with disabilities.

In the poem titled "Merakit," Stella has a stanza that implies a movement supporting people with disabilities:

*to build dreams
on a blank white paper
versified by the servants of the
soul.*

"Servants of the soul" refers to people who act based on their conscience, a conscience closely related to a dimension of humanity. Here, Stella became part of the people, who served in the name of humanity's conscience.



Stella and her Learn Sign Language community, Freedom House (Rumah Merdeka), 2022.

Stella comprehends the complicated discourse that arose from oppression of people by others who become oppressors. This discourse views people with disabilities as sinful, sick or pitiful. This is evident in her poetry, her contribution to a movement supporting people with disabilities.

In 2019, after publishing her first poetry book, Stella, along with her friends, established the Jombang Disability Volunteer Class. She later joined an education program for disability activists at GRADIASI school and became involved in the disability movement in Indonesia. Through interactions with disability activists and writers, Stella deepened her understanding of ableism and ableist attitudes.

Stella is currently completing her bachelor's thesis at the University of Darul 'Ulum Jombang. Her research focuses on the relationship between family support and psychological well-being of people with disabilities. This research is significant for Stella as it aligns with her advocacy of fighting for the rights of children with disabilities, and emphasizing the importance of family and societal support.

Ishak Salim and Zakia are book lovers and authors. They love writing as much as reading poems. They belong to Media Ekspedisi Difabel.

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Discussion of book *Thrown Away but Still Loved* at SMP Junior High School of Muhammadiyah Boarding School, Jombang, 2022.



Stella in the launching of her second book of poems, Jombang City Square, 2024.

e-mails: isankilang@gmail.com & khyazakia22@gmail.com.

Endnote

1 The discourse includes mystical, medical, and moral perspectives. Mystic-based societal perspective views disabilities as supernatural conditions linked to past sins, God's test, or karma. Medical-based societal perspective often

perceives a person with disabilities as sick, needing rehabilitation and cure. Moral-based perspective regards people with disabilities as deserving pity, continuous assistance, and so forth.

Ruksana*

SEWA Delhi and WIEGO

Ruksana was a young girl when she learned stitching and embroidery from members of her family as this was the family trade. However, she had also completed a beautician's course and had worked in a salon for a few years, which she had enjoyed. First interviewed in 2020, Ruksana was working for both Ruaab SEWA¹ and a contractor in her neighborhood, as this allowed her to pick up the work from their centers and work on it at home.

Ruksana's family had been facing significant economic challenges even before the spread of COVID-19. Her husband lost his job in a garment factory nearby as a result of the communal violence that devastated parts of Delhi in early 2020. Her work with Ruaab and the contractor meant she could make some money through the pandemic, but the rates for her work had been decreasing even with Ruaab. However, this was still an improvement from the contractor, who paid her even less per mask than Ruaab's decreased rate.

Ruksana had a ration card, but the public distribution system shop only provided rice and wheat. All the other supplies had to be bought, and the liquid petroleum gas cylinder proved to be a significant expense. She had to take a loan from a moneylender to tide her family over and buy supplies, such as gas, oil and salt, and the interest owed had begun to build up.

When she was interviewed again in 2021, she barely received any work, and her earnings reduced to Rs 400 per month. The contractor in her locality had not been receiving sufficient work orders either and hence was not able to employ home-based workers except old contacts.

Ruksana's husband's income had also suffered a devastating blow. In 2021, he worked for only ten days every month at a woodworking factory because the factory did not have sufficient work to engage its workers. As the family income shrank, it became difficult for Ruksana and her family to repay their loan, and lenders began to pester her. Thus, she was compelled to take a loan against her Life Insurance Company (LIC) policy² to clear off the loan. During the pandemic and subsequent lockdowns, it became hard for her children to access education because she had limited access to wifi data plans and electronic devices.

So far, as an *aagewaan* (local union leader), she has actively engaged in educating other women employed as home-based workers about the various legislations and government schemes meant to empower them.

*This is an excerpt from *Home-Based Workers of Delhi*, SEWA Delhi and WIEGO, September 2022, page 41.

SEWA Delhi works with over 50,000 women in facilitating leadership building, finance training, and other social security programs that enable women to make positive changes in their communities.

WIEGO focuses on the working poor in the informal economy, especially women, who are not understood, valued, or supported in policy circles or by the international development community.

For further information, please contact: Shalini Sinha, Work Sector Specialist, WIEGO, e-mail: shalini.sinha@wiego.org; www.wiego.org.

Endnotes

- 1 Ruaab SEWA is a unique model of garment production and sourcing that is owned and managed by women producers, which ensures ethical and transparent supply chain. The company has nine board members, six are the producers itself, and two are representative of SEWA and one is independent. See SEWA Delhi, <https://sewadelhi.org/ruaab-sewa/>.
- 2 Life Insurance Company was established in 1956 as required by the Life Insurance Corporation Act, 19 June 1956. The law has the "objective of spreading life insurance much more widely and in particular to the rural areas with a view to reach all insurable persons in the country, providing them adequate financial cover at a reasonable cost." See Life Insurance Company, <https://licindia.in/web/guest/history>.

Statement against the Introduction of New Procedures for Revocation of Residence Status of Permanent Residents*

Solidarity Network with Migrants Japan

The Government of Japan has convened the Ministerial Council on Acceptance and Inclusion of Foreign Human Resources today, and decided on the draft amendment of the Immigration Control Act to create a new system of worker development to take the place of the Technical Intern Training Program. It has also decided to consider further clarifying the requirements for permanent resident status and revoking the residence status of permanent residents who no longer fulfill those requirements, in response to the expected increase in foreign residents under the Specified Skills Worker system, under which the visa holders may reside permanently. We are against this policy, as revocation of permanent resident status greatly destabilizes not only the status of foreign residents who currently hold the status of permanent residents, but of all foreign residents who may apply for permanent resident status in the future.

The residence status of permanent residents is granted to those who fulfill strict requirements, such as residing in Japan for a certain number of years and living a stable life. For most other resident status, status holders are required to renew their status each time it expires. Those with status for specific purposes may face the risk of not having their status renewed

when their circumstances change, such as for those with status for employment in certain areas or for students, or for spouses when their spouse dies or they are separated. For foreign residents who have established their lives in Japan a stable residence status without such risks is necessary to feel safe in their daily lives. The status of permanent residents was supposed to be such status. However, examinations for permanent resident status have become increasingly strict, and a rising number of foreign residents are refused permanent resident status despite having lived in this country for many years.

Meanwhile, revocation of a permanent resident status deprives the foreign resident of a stable livelihood that he/she has built over many years of hard work in Japan. If the status of residence could be revoked for reasons that could happen to anyone, such as being unable to satisfy the livelihood requirement because of illness, unemployment or social changes, or failing to pay taxes or social security payments because of decline in income or error during surgical operations, foreign residents would be unable to lead their lives feeling safe. It should be sufficient to respond to tax or social security payment arrears, or minor infringement of the law that do

not amount to grounds for deportation with reminders, seizures, administrative or criminal sanctions, just as with Japanese citizens. If only foreign residents are penalized with revocation of resident status despite having fully established their lives in Japan, it would amount to discrimination against foreign residents.

Under existing law, when false information is provided while applying, even permanent residents may have their status revoked, and they may be deported, when they violate certain criminal and other laws.

The introduction of the system for revocation of status of permanent residents will not only destabilize the lives of nearly 900,000 foreign residents who have permanent resident status (as of June 2023: 880,178, or 27.3% of all foreign residents), but will also cause concern among foreign residents who plan to apply for permanent resident status. This will go against the “realization of an inclusive society” that the government is trying to achieve. Also, if the child/children’s permanent residence permit is revoked in conjunction with the revocation of the parents’ residence status, it would have tremendous impact on the child/children’s career and future.

We strongly protest against the government policy that places foreign residents who have established their lives in Japan, and have chosen this country as their final abode under lifelong strict control and supervision, and that allows deprivation of the status even from those who were granted the most stable residence status.

— oOo —



SMJ subsequently uploaded an online petition via Change.org stating the adverse impact of such a law on the foreign residents in Japan. The petition stressed the following:¹

Foreign residents who have gone through strict examinations to acquire permanent residence status are people who work and raise their children in Japan and

made this country their final abode.

Such people should be treated on a similar basis as Japanese citizens to the maximum extent possible. It should be sufficient to respond to tax or social security payment arrears, or minor infringement of the law that do not amount to grounds for deportation with penalties such as reminders, seizures, administrative or criminal sanctions according to the law, just as with Japanese citizens. If foreign residents are subject to revocation of resident status despite having fully established their lives in Japan and were granted permanent resident status, it would amount to discrimination against foreign residents.

The petition titled #Don'tRevokethePermanentResidenceStatus was addressed to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, President of the House of Councillors, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Justice. It has been translated from the original Japanese language to several other languages (Korean, Portuguese,

Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, Spanish, Tagalog, Thai and Vietnamese). It has gathered more than 22,500 signatures since its start on early March 2024.

* This statement was issued on February 9, 2024 and is available at the website of Solidarity Network with Migrants Japan (SMJ), <https://migrants.jp/news/voice/20240209-1.html>.

For further information, please contact: Solidarity Network with Migrants Japan (SMJ), Solidarity Network with Migrants Japan, 3F 1-12-6 Ueno Taito-ku Tokyo; ph 03-3837-2316; fax 03-3837-2317; e-mail: smj@migrants.jp; <https://migrants.jp/english.html>.

Endnote

1 #Don'tRevokethePermanentResidenceStatus, www.change.org/p/don-t-revoke-the-permanent-residence-status?utm_medium=custom_url&utm_source=share_petition&recruited_by_id=3964b888-ac52-49e8-a445-ad4c65fa31ef.

Editor's note:

The Japanese government submitted a bill to the Diet on 15 March 2024 on new grounds for revocation of permanent residence status. The bill contains the following new grounds:

- Violation of the Immigration Control Act such as not fulfilling the obligation to carry at all times the Residence Card, and failure

to apply for renewal of the Residence Card;

- Willful failure to pay taxes or social security contributions;
- Getting imprisonment sentence (including suspended execution of sentence) for crimes such as breaking into a residence, counterfeiting documents, assault, injury or theft.

The draft bill also states that once the permanent residence permit is revoked, the change to

another status of residence is not guaranteed and subject to the discretion of the Immigration Services Agency on what status of residence will be granted. There is a possibility, therefore, that mid- to long-term resident status will not be granted.

In other words, the revocation of a permanent residence status would deprive a permanent resident of the foundation for stable living in Japan that he or she has built over the years.

Human Rights Education in Asia-Pacific

Jefferson R. Plantilla

One hundred ninety-four UNESCO member-states adopted the “Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Sustainable Development” at UNESCO’s General Conference on 20 November 2023. This 2023 Recommendation revised the 1974 “Recommendation concerning education for international understanding, co-operation and peace and education relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms.”

UNESCO announced that the 2023 Recommendation, among other features,¹

strongly emphasizes human rights and fundamental freedoms and integrates issues deemed central to achieving lasting peace in our era, such as sustainable development, climate change, respect for diversity, gender equality, and media and information literacy.

outlines 14 guiding principles, concrete learning outcomes and priority action areas for holistically reshaping all aspects of education systems, from laws and policies to curricula development, teaching practices, learning environments and assessment. For example, it highlights that beyond critical literacy and numeracy skills, learners

should acquire competencies like empathy, critical thinking, intercultural understanding and environmental stewardship.

The fourteen guiding principles are summarized below.²

On 19 March 2024, the National Human Rights Commission of Korea inaugurated its Human Rights Education Center. The Center is meant to “create a space for human rights education and culture that incorporates the values of human rights, to improve everyone’s human rights awareness, to ensure the right to human rights education, and to effectively train human rights education professionals.”

The Center will be providing specialized training facilities on human rights education.

The need for national facilities in implementing international initiatives is embodied by the Human Rights Education Center of Korea. Training “human rights education professionals” is most effective when done at the national level and in support of United Nations programs and guides such as the UNESCO 2024 Recommendations.

Varied Initiatives³

The 13th volume of *Human Rights Education in Asia-Pacific* will be available on HURIGHTS OSAKA’s website in April 2024. This volume is a collection of

- Human-rights based
- Accessible and of good quality (education as a public common good)
- Non-discriminatory
- Instilling an ethic of care, compassion and solidarity
- Advancing gender equality
- Equitable, inclusive and respectful of diversity
- Ensuring the safety, health and well-being of learners, teachers and education personnel
- Life-long, continuous and transformative
- Promoting the co-creation of knowledge
- Upholding freedom of thought, belief, religion and expression and banishing advocacy of all forms of hatred
- Participatory, notably through the ethical and responsible use of technologies
- Applying international and global perspectives, underlining connections between the local and the global
- Promoting dialogue between cultures and generations
- Instilling an ethic of global citizenship and shared responsibility for peace, human rights and sustainable development for the benefit of all

articles presenting initiatives on human rights promotion and education in different countries in the Asia-Pacific.

The articles discuss activities that range from campaigns to outreach programs, and from non-formal training to formal education courses. Different institutions/organizations are involved in these activities from a student organization to non-governmental organizations, from a special court to national human rights institutions.

On awareness-raising, the articles from Cambodia, Pacific islands and Taiwan present concrete ways of making the general public become aware and informed of human rights issues and concepts. The articles discuss study tours, museum visits, art competitions, rallies, and television and online media promotions. These activities have direct effect on people who participate or even watch or witness the activities.

On non-formal education, the training of human rights workers, government officials, company officials and employees, law students, paralegals and lawyers is discussed in articles from India, Cambodia, Japan and Yemen. The training programs vary from one group to another, but they all concentrate on providing practical skills of protecting and realizing the human rights of the people they work with (particularly the disadvantaged groups in society as in the case of the Indian article), or documenting human rights violations and abuse to hold people accountable (as discussed in the article from Yemen), or providing legal

assistance to human rights violations victims (as in the case of the training for lawyers and law students in Cambodia). The training content ranges from learning laws and legal procedures relevant to human rights, to learning skills in documenting human rights violations, to filing petitions in government offices and the courts, to working with communities to address human rights issues.

Human rights courses exist in tertiary education as shown in courses in a number of universities in Japan and in a teacher education university in Pakistan. The main concern is on the human rights content and teaching method that should be applied in teaching human rights at the tertiary level of education.

There is also integration of human rights education into the school curriculum discussed in the context of Global Citizenship Education (GCED). This is presented in the article from the Philippines. This article somehow follows the UNESCO view that in case of limited resources, human rights and other concerns can be learned through GCED. But in the context of the Philippines, this approach may overlap human rights education that has supposedly been integrated in the school curriculum.

The article from Hong Kong provides detailed discussion of the challenges of inclusive education. The needed support system can be expensive in terms of professionally trained staff and school facilities, and requires support from the

teachers and school officials. There is likewise opposition from parents who want their children with disabilities to enter the competitive higher levels of education without considering the difficulties and disadvantage their children will face.

These articles are indicative of the complexity of human rights promotion and education work at the ground-level in the Asia-Pacific. Issues in society as well as the institutions that undertake human rights promotion and education determine the variety of programs and activities being developed for specific contexts and objectives.

Jefferson R. Plantilla is a researcher at HURIGHTS OSAKA and edits the Human Rights Education in Asia-Pacific.

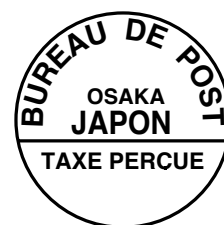
For further information, please contact: HURIGHTS OSAKA.

Endnote

- 1 UNESCO adopts landmark guidance on education's cross-cutting role in promoting peace, UNESCO, www.unesco.org/en/articles/unesco-adopts-landmark-guidance-educations-cross-cutting-role-promoting-peace.
- 2 Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Sustainable Development – An explainer, UNESCO, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000388330>.
- 3 This is an excerpt of the Introduction in the 13th volume of *Human Rights Education in Asia-Pacific*.

HURIGHTS OSAKA Calendar

For the 114th volume of *Human Rights Education in Asia-Pacific*, HURIGHTS OSAKA will start collecting articles that discuss experiences of human rights promotion and education work in Asia and the Pacific.



PRINTED MATTER

AIR MAIL

May be opened for inspection by the postal service.

HURIGHTS OSAKA, inspired by the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, formally opened in December 1994. It has the following aims: 1) to engender popular understanding in Osaka of the international human rights standards; 2) to support international exchange between Osaka and countries in Asia-Pacific through collection and dissemination of information and materials on human rights; and 3) to promote human rights in Asia-Pacific in cooperation with national and regional institutions and civil society organizations as well as the United Nations. In order to achieve these goals, HURIGHTS OSAKA has activities such as Information Handling, Research and Study, Education and Training, Publications, and Consultancy Services.

FOCUS Asia-Pacific is designed to highlight significant issues and activities relating to human rights in the Asia-Pacific. Relevant information and articles can be sent to HURIGHTS OSAKA for inclusion in the next editions of the newsletter.

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