

Focus



Asia-Pacific

Newsletter of the Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Center (HURIGHTS OSAKA)

September 2021 Vol. 105

Contents

Within and Beyond the Human Rights Museums: Kaohsiung City of Taiwan

This report explains the museums in Kaohsiung City that present and preserve the legacy and meaning of historical events in the life of the people in the city, which also influenced the history of Taiwan as a whole.

- Elsa Wen-Ying Hsu

Page 2

Liberation War Museum

This article explains the Liberation War Museum and its activities aimed at ensuring that people in Bangladesh remember and learn from the struggle towards national independence during the war for liberation in 1970s.

- Mofidul Hoque

Page 6

Stateless Second Generation Nikkeijins in the Philippines

This is a short report on the many children born in the Philippines before and during the second World War with Japanese fathers and Filipino mothers who want to become Japanese citizens. Some gained Japanese citizenship, but many others already in their 80s are still waiting to be recognized as Japanese.

- Philippine Nikkei-jin Legal Support Center

Page 8

Zindagii Shoista (Living with Dignity): An Experiment on Community-based Initiative on Violence Against Women and Girls

This is a short report on the evaluation of a project in several villages in Tajikistan aimed at eliminating violence against women and girls using economic and family-centered approaches.

- Subhiya Mastonshoeva, Shahrbonu Shonaimova, Parvina Gulyamova, Rachel Jewkes, Nwabisa Shai, Esnat Chirwa, Henri Myrtilinen

Page 11

Editorial

Remembering and the Future

Remembering painful experiences can mean reliving the horrors of the past. But such remembrance can also be part of a process of healing psycho-emotional wounds, of closing a chapter in life and of paying tribute to heroic actions of people.

Many museums have been established to ensure that people understand and appreciate the sacrifices of others in bringing about justice and change in society. They serve as venues for learning lessons of history – with the hope that such lessons learned would prevent history from being repeated.

In the history of Asia, the 1970s was a period of turmoil. Wars and political repressions occurred during this decade. Many lives were lost, properties destroyed and people displaced because of the wars and political repressions.

Museums in different parts of Asia have been established to remember these events and give homage to those who paid with their lives or endured severe suffering to save others. The sacrifice and heroism of these people are documented and presented in these museums for people to reflect upon and find lessons that can guide the present as well as the future.

Within and Beyond the Human Rights Museums: Kaohsiung City of Taiwan

Elsa Wen-Ying Hsu

Kaohsiung is a spiritual home for Taiwan's modern democratic transition and a city with a living human rights history. The development of the city reflects Taiwan's economic and political modernization, as well as its ultimate democratization. When we look back at the historical development of Kaohsiung, we are able to relive moments that profoundly shaped Taiwan's history, including the 228 Incident, the Ciaotou Incident, and the Formosa Incident (Kaohsiung Incident), and places steeped in human rights history such as the Unknown Soldier Memorial, War and Peace Memorial Park and Theme Hall, the Mingde Navy Disciplinary Camp, and the Female Laborers Memorial Park. In Kaohsiung's history, we find the human tragedy faced by ordinary people during the process of national development and transformation. As we enter the twenty-first century, we witness Kaohsiung's contemporary human rights culture at sites such as the Kaohsiung Museum of Labor, the Wild Strawberries Movement at the Urban Spotlight, and the memorial to the residents of Siaolin who lost their lives to Typhoon Morakot. These human rights episodes have created a unique sense of identity among the residents of

Kaohsiung City. For outside visitors from Taiwan and abroad, they inevitably evoke a sense of shared human tragedy. In terms of human rights education, the city's human rights museums as well as historical sites of injustice are city campuses for developing human rights awareness and cultivating more inclusive human rights culture.

Kaohsiung Museum of History and 228 Incident Exhibition Hall

The building that currently houses the Kaohsiung Museum of History was built in 1938 and was originally the second Takao (modern Kaohsiung) Provincial Office. Following the retrocession of Taiwan from Japanese colonial rule, the building became the Kaohsiung City Hall and the center for municipal local government. However, it eventually proved inadequate for its purpose and a new facility was constructed. The old building was designated as a municipal historical site and converted for

use as the "Kaohsiung Museum of History," with the objective of carrying forward and preserving the history and culture of Kaohsiung. The new museum was formally opened on 25 October 1998.

Aside from the architectural value of the building, the Museum encompasses a rich history. As the Takao Provincial Office during the colonial period and the Kaohsiung City Hall following retrocession, before eventually becoming the Kaohsiung Museum of History,



Kaohsiung Museum of History and 228 Incident Exhibition Hall

the building is part of the living history of the city. The “228 Incident”¹ is the greatest burden in Taiwan’s recent historical memory. The Taiwanese had become increasingly dissatisfied with the mismanagement and incompetence of the Taiwan Provincial Administrative Executive Office following retrocession, and in 1947 conflict between native Taiwanese and mainlander immigrants spread across the whole island. The subsequent military crackdown across Taiwan began in Kaohsiung. The building played an important role during the 228 Incident, and today the Museum houses a 228 Incident Exhibition Hall. The building has not only witnessed the historical development of Kaohsiung, but in the future will continue to preserve the life and history of the city. The Museum also contains many other historical materials related to Kaohsiung City.

War and Peace Memorial Park and Theme Hall

A site on the coast of Cijin, Kaohsiung was chosen as the location for the War and Peace Memorial Park. The choice of site captures the emotions of Taiwanese soldiers as they left the port and saw their homeland for the last time. The park was established as a memorial for the Taiwanese who sacrificed their lives in the Second World War and the Chinese Civil War, and officially opened on 20 May 2009.

A theme hall situated in the park is the only such memorial in the world dedicated to the Taiwanese soldiers who died in the Greater East Asia War, the Chinese Civil War, and the Korean War. The hall also displays items used in the wars and the soldiers’ subsequent fight for vindication. A database of Taiwanese war victims housed in the hall is currently the only such system in Taiwan.

The white doves of peace in the park are made of marble and cast seashells. The exterior of the monument consists of two hearts facing each other with two matching shapes resembling flying doves of peace overlaid onto each heart. These shapes also resemble a pair of hands, symbolizing two hands clasped together praying for peace. Outside the theme hall, the same face is portrayed in mosaic wearing different military uniforms—Japanese Army, the Nationalist Army, and the People’s Liberation Army—to represent the fate of the Taiwanese youth in the Second World War and Chinese Civil War.

Inside the park, a memorial light wall uses twenty-four pictures and narratives to depict incidents involving Taiwanese youth and women in the war period. On the poles of the memorial lanterns, doves symbolize peace and a gun stuck into the ground represent opposition to war. The bases of the signs in the park are designed as bombs stuck into the ground, symbolizing opposition to war and echoing the theme of the park. The circle near the monuments is called the “heart of echoes.” Visitors can stand here to pay homage and offer prayers to the soldiers who sacrificed for Taiwan.

Kaohsiung Museum of Labor

Kaohsiung has a long history of industrial development, highlighted by its export processing zones, the petrochemical industry, and the shipping industry. Although in recent years Kaohsiung City has embarked on a transformation



War and Peace Memorial Park and Theme Hall



Kaohsiung Museum of Labor

from its old industrial role to a maritime city centered on recreation and tourism, the development of labor culture during Taiwan's economic takeoff is an important part of the city's history that deserves commemoration. On this basis, the Labor Affairs Bureau of Kaohsiung City government officially opened the only museum of labor in the country in conjunction with the International Workers' Day on 1 May 2010 with the aim of preserving labor culture and helping better understand the contribution of workers to Taiwan's economic development.

The Kaohsiung Museum of Labor is dedicated to the collection, study, preservation, and maintenance of resources related to the topic of labor across the country. The Museum makes use of innovative interactive displays, educational activities, and service provision to encourage participation, interaction, learning, and

remembering of the past by workers and the wider community, promoting community awareness and preserving labor culture. The Kaohsiung Museum of Labor also joins the ranks of museums with the same theme around the world, enhancing the international reputation of Kaohsiung and giving Taiwan's

workers a place in the international history of labor.

Houjing Cultural Hall

The decision of the China Petroleum Corporation (CPC) and the Taiwanese government in 1987 to build Taiwan's fifth naphtha cracker plant at the Kaohsiung Oil Refinery in the Nanzih District led to a series of environmental protests. A scandal surrounding wastewater pollution from the Linyuan Petrochemical Industrial Park further increased public awareness of environmental issues and the intensity of the protests.

Spontaneous demonstrations occurred in Houjing after residents became aware of the CPC plans. Protestors vented long-held anger at pollution in the area, expressed determination to fight the naphtha cracker plant, demanding an immediate halt to construction at the plant and the rapid introduction of measures to address pollution at a further forty plants. Protestors



Houjing Cultural Hall

also demanded that CPC draw up a plan to move their plants out of Kaohsiung in order to facilitate the development of the metropolitan area and a comprehensive government review of the high-polluting petrochemical industry based on ecological and environmental considerations.

People established the “Self-help Association to Oppose the Fifth Naphtha Cracker Plant” at the Fongping Temple in Houjing, travelled to Taipei several times to protest, as well as petitioned the Kaohsiung City Council, the Environmental Protection Administration, and the Legislative Yuan. During the protests, there were frequent clashes with the police. Eventually, protestors won the agreement of the government to hold a referendum in Houjing on the Fifth Naphtha Cracker Plant. This was the first such referendum in Taiwan, and took place before the passage of the Referendum Law. In the referendum, 60.8 percent of voters were “resolutely opposed” to the plans, while only 39.2 percent “agreed to negotiate.” However, the result of the referendum failed to change government policy.

Construction of the Fifth Naphtha Cracker Plant began in 1990, with the government and CPC committing to paying a total of NT\$1.5 billion in compensation and relocating the plant within twenty-five years. The plant was opened in 1994, but subsequent oil leakages and an explosion at the second vacuum gas oil plant provoked local anger. In response, Houjing residents launched a “Yellow Ribbon

Campaign” in opposition to the plant.

Displays on the movement against the Fifth Naphtha Cracker Plant are housed in the sixth exhibition hall of the Houjing Cultural Hall. The Houjing Cultural Hall has a total of seven exhibition halls, telling the story of Houjing and preserving important historical artifacts from the area.

Within and Beyond the City's Human Rights Museums

In addition to visiting human rights museums, there are many human rights historical sites in Kaohsiung City that can facilitate a more comprehensive human rights education. The main discourses of Taiwan's political history or historical records displayed in the National Human Rights Museums may not include the integrated ethnic spirit during the 228 Incident as well as other human rights values showed in the history of the city. The 228 Incident remains in the collective memory of the Taiwanese people to this day and the wounds have still not fully healed. Starting from a local perspective, a tour of human rights sites in Kaohsiung City reveals the spirit of ethnic harmony in the Kaohsiung Senior High School's Self-Defense Corps formed during the 228 Incident often ignored in contemporary historical accounts², and encourages us to reflect on how to improve the protection of human rights for ordinary laborers as well as migrant workers by remembering the twenty-five female victims buried at the Cijin Female Laborers Memorial Park. And when we witness the memorial

to those who lost their lives to natural calamity in Siaolin Village, we are reminded of the importance of pursuing sustainable development.

Some Reflections

“Deepening Democracy” is not only reflected in openness to different ideas, but also a willingness to resolve conflict through rational public discourse and an openness to different individual experiences. The phenomenon of perforated sovereignties reminds us that even under the existing political and economic framework, society retains the capacity to produce a new generation of human rights innovation. The concept of “dark tourism” is not only about recognizing that unique historical experiences that contributed to the growth of human rights around the world are a marketable resource, it also aspires to use international travel to develop a common language of human rights that spans national boundaries.

In the complex relationship between human rights and globalization, we recognize that “globalization” does not preclude “choice.” To the contrary, globalization provides many new opportunities. Both “standardized human rights culture” and a “blind rejection of foreign human rights culture” act as obstacles to the natural development of an innovative and diverse human rights culture necessary for the development of a harmonious international culture of human rights. A “voluntary human rights consensus” can help

(Continued on page 14)

Liberation War Museum

Mofidul Hoque

The Liberation War Museum in Dhaka, Bangladesh was established in 1996. It commemorates the heroic struggle of the Bengali people for their democratic and national rights. The struggle turned into an armed conflict following the genocide unleashed by the military rulers of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, which culminated in the emergence of Bangladesh as a secular, democratic state in December 1971.

The prime objective of the Museum is to make the new generation aware about the spirit and aspirations for which their forefathers had fought. It also encourages them to take a stand against violations of human rights and the acts of genocide carried out in Bangladesh and its prevention in any part of the world.

The Museum is the outcome of a citizens' effort and is run by a Board of Trustees. It is now recognized, nationally and internationally, as a credible institution on the history of Bangladesh's independence. The Museum, through its various programs endeavors to link the history of the Liberation War with contemporary pressing social and human rights issues. It is a founding member of International Coalition of Sites of Conscience and is an institutional member



Liberation War Museum in Dhaka

of the International Association of Genocide Scholars.

The Museum was initially housed in a rented two-storied colonial building with displays in six galleries. Over the years the Museum had enriched its collection, which includes rare photographs, documents, media coverage and materials used by freedom fighters and martyrs of the Liberation War. However the Museum could display only a small portion of the collection due to paucity of space. Right from the beginning the dream was to build a proper and permanent museum as a storehouse of historical facts and knowledge.

In April 2017, a permanent Museum complex was inaugurated in the Civic Centre, Agargaon in Dhaka city,

with large floor-space, endowed with modern facilities for display and archiving, auditorium, seminar hall, open-air theater, library, film center, etc. The permanent museum space and facilities strengthened the efforts of the Museum to expand its reach and activities.

School Programs

Attempt is made for visitors to the Museum to realize how the fundamental principles of democracy, secularism and nationalism of the Bangladesh Constitution (1972) evolved through popular struggle and sacrifices. Through displays in the gallery as well as regular programs, the most important of which are two educational programs, one for Dhaka city and a travelling museum for

schools in the remote villages, the Museum highlights the core values of the Liberation War.

Students from various educational institutions of Dhaka city are brought to the Museum to introduce them to the history of the nation.

“Oral History” Collection

The school program was expanded in 2007 when the Museum was able to mount display inside a long-haul bus which started to reach-out to the school children in the remote parts of the country. The students viewed the display inside the bus and were encouraged to interview elderly people of their family or community who had witnessed or taken part in the war and write down the eye-witness accounts to be sent to the Museum.

The “Oral History” collection now consists of more than

60,000 historical narratives provided by the students. The teachers from the educational institutions extend their cooperation to collect the eye-witness accounts and send them to the Museum. They have formed a Teacher's Network to promote the cause of memorialization.

Killing Field Memorial Site

In 2001 the Museum excavated a killing field in the Dhaka suburb and built a memorial site which became a hub of victim-centric community engagement.

Liberation Docfest Bangladesh

The Museum holds an annual festival of documentary films to highlight the struggle for liberation and human rights of people around the world. The festival seeks to view the human struggle and suffering for justice from a global perspective. With the break-out of COVID-19 crisis the festival in 2020 was

held online which greatly expanded its reach. In 2021, a total of one hundred nineteen documentary films from fifty-six countries were shown to a registered 11,000 viewers. The award-winning film “Why Not”, a Bangladesh-Korea joint production focusing on comfort women of Korea and rape victims of 1971 liberation war, was shown in the 2021 festival.

Center for the Study of Genocide and Justice

The Center for the Study of Genocide and Justice (CSGJ), established by the Liberation War Museum in 2014, aims to organize and promote research, documentation, study, education and networking on genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes committed in Bangladesh and other parts of the world. CSGJ works to strengthen the national and global efforts for Genocide Prevention (GP) and the non-violent method of Responsibility to Protect (R2P).

Each year CSGJ organizes month-long certificate course, residential winter school, seminars and public lectures on various issues relating to genocide and mass atrocity crimes. CSGJ conducts research on Bangladesh genocide, as well as other genocides committed in various parts of the world in order to educate the youth. Since the eruption of Rohingya crisis the research team from CSGJ made various visits to the makeshift camps in Cox's Bazar to collect testimonies from the survivors



Jalladkhana Killing Field Memorial Site

(Continued on page 15)

Stateless Second Generation *Nikkeijins* in the Philippines

Philippine Nikkei-jin Legal Support Center

Before the Second World War, many Japanese men migrated to the Philippines for work or business. A significant number of them married Filipino women and had children. But many died during the war without having their children properly registered in the family registry (*Koseki*) in Japan, or their family documents were lost during or after the war.

The children of Japanese fathers (called second generation *Nikkeijins*) born before and during the war are legally Japanese citizens under Japanese laws. They want to be recognized as Japanese citizens, but documentation issues make them de facto stateless persons.

Current Situation

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (MOFA) has been surveying since 1995 the war-displaced Japanese descendants left behind in the Philippines through the Philippine Nikkei-jin Legal Support Center (PNLSC).

The 14th MOFA survey (2021) reveals almost four thousand second generation *Nikkeijins* recorded in different provinces in the Philippines including Davao and Palawan as shown in Table 1.

The seven hundred twenty-four surviving second generation *Nikkeijins* can be considered stateless. Many of them are now

Table 1. Summary of Status of War-Displaced Japanese descendants (second generation *Nikkeijins*) as of March 2021

Acquired Japanese nationality (Category A)	1,459	
No Japanese nationality, <i>Koseki</i> of Japanese father located (Category B)	1,492	229 - alive
No Japanese nationality, <i>Koseki</i> of Japanese father not located (Category C)	863	495 - alive
TOTAL	3,814	724

in their 80s and still desire to gain Japanese citizenship.

Route to Citizenship Application

In order to prepare for their petition for Japanese citizenship, the second generation *Nikkeijins* apply for stateless recognition in the Philippines.

The application for stateless recognition is filed with the Refugees and Stateless Persons Protection Unit (RSPPU) of the Department of Justice (DOJ) in the Philippines. The main purpose of stateless recognition is to ensure that they continue to enjoy their right to live safely in the Philippines. The state counsel of DOJ-RSPPU makes the evaluation and assessment, including interview of the applicants, before issuing the Notice of Recognition of Statelessness.

With the stateless recognition, they can apply for travel documents with the Department

of Foreign Affairs (DFA) of the Philippines.

Since 2017, a total of six second generation *Nikkeijins* were already recognized as stateless persons by DOJ-RSPPU and some of them were able to obtain travel documents issued by the DFA to visit Japan; and among them five obtained Japanese citizenship through the *Shuseki* petition in Japan. In August 2019, Ms Ines Mallari, President of Philippine Nikkei Jin Kai Rengokai, and Atty. Hiroyuki Kawai of PNLSC submitted one hundred three applications for stateless recognition with the DOJ-RSPPU though they still needed to submit additional necessary documents.

Surviving second generation *Nikkeijins* can file a *Shuseki* petition to obtain recognition as Japanese citizen. This petition is filed with the family court in Japan with *Koseki* of the Japanese father, birth certificates, marriage contracts,

the Notice of Recognition of Statelessness and other records as essential supporting documents.

With the Notice of Recognition of Statelessness issued by the DOJ-RSPPU, a petitioner can be given temporary recognition as stateless person by the family court. This is a step towards acquiring Japanese citizenship, and also a pressure to the Japanese government to do more in line with its subscription to the international initiative of ending statelessness.

PNLSC, in partnership with the Philippine Nikkei Jin Kai Rengokai, assists in the filing *Shuseki* petitions in Japan. Since 2004, three hundred eighteen petitions had been filed in Japan, and two hundred seventy-three of them had been approved (as of September 2021). Some petitions encountered difficulties due to lack of documents or inconsistency of claim caused by destruction of vital documents.

Another way of obtaining Japanese citizenship is through the Civil Registrar's Office in the city where the deceased father has his domicile. But this process requires the existence of *Koseki*, and takes more time.

For the deceased second generation *Nikkeijins*, PNLSC submitted in 2020 ten applications to register them in the civil registrar's office of the city of their father (based on his address in Japan). Five applications were approved, three were denied and two are pending. Officials of the Legal Affairs Office, the higher

authority of city civil registrar's office, are very strict with documents from the Philippines that were registered late. Appeals for reconsideration of registration denial are being made.

Role of UNHCR

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) launched in 2014 the "I Belong Campaign" that aimed to end statelessness by the year 2024. UNHCR is now paying much more attention on the stateless second generation *Nikkeijins* in the Philippines and started a new project for them.

The Philippines was the first Asian country to become a signatory to the 1954 Convention related to the Status of Stateless Persons and took a lead role in ending statelessness in Asia.

The Philippine government launched the National Action Plan (NAP) to end statelessness on 24 November 2017. Subsequently, the UNHCR launched the SURGE Capacity Project, which "aims to support the Philippine Government in improving its quantitative and qualitative data and enhancing its policy and legislative framework." The project released in April 2021 a report entitled *Desk Review on Populations At Risk of Statelessness - Children of Philippine Descent in a Migratory Setting in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Countries and Persons of Japanese Descent*.¹ The report recommends to

- "Add Persons of Japanese Descent ("PJD") to the list of identified populations at-risk of statelessness;"
- "Consider pursuing a joint committee on bilateral cooperation between the Philippines and Japan similar to what was utilized to resolve cases of Persons of Indonesian Descent (PID) as a matter of urgency."²

The UNHCR also envisioned the creation of the Civil Society Network (CSN) on statelessness in the Philippines, and PNLSC was invited as one of its members. In the online exploratory meeting held on 25 June 2020, thirty-six participants from sixteen civil organizations all agreed to the creation of CSN.

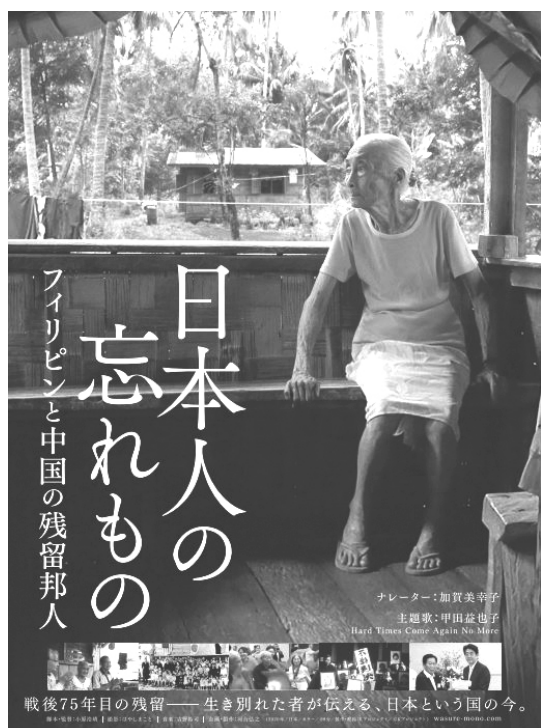
Advocacy in Japan

PNLSC has continuing communication with the members of the Japanese parliament (Diet), especially the members of the Parliamentary Group on Japan-Philippine Friendship. Some Diet Members have expressed strong sympathy on this matter ever since PNLSC started. Considering the age of the second generation *Nikkeijins*, PNLSC has been accelerating its lobbying effort through meetings with members of the parliamentary group. In 2020, Atty. Kawai presented to the Diet members the book entitled *Restoration—War and Nationality Recovery Movement for War-displaced Japanese Descendants Left Behind in the Philippines*. The book, written jointly by Atty. Kawai and Mr. Norihiro Inomata, documents the plight of the ageing second generation *Nikkeijins* and argues



Restoration – War and Nationality

for the recognition of their Japanese citizenship. Some members of the Diet reacted favorably to the book and expressed commitment to help find a way to resolve the issue.



"ABANDONED"

2020 was an epoch-making year in the advocacy for recognition of second generation *Nikkeijins* as Japanese citizens. The first movie about second generation *Nikkeijins* entitled "ABANDONED" was produced by Atty. Kawai and directed by Mr Hiroyasu Obara. It was screened in theaters in Japan in July-September 2020. It was again screened in Nagano prefecture in May 2021, Kagoshima prefecture in August 2021, and Kyoto prefecture (Toy Film Museum) from 4 August to 26 September 2021.

A large number of Japanese learned the history of the second generation *Nikkeijins* that they had never known before. The movie was also used as teaching material at various universities in Japan and showed during classes or seminars. Many young Japanese sent to PNLSC their messages and points of view on the movie.

The cases of *Nikkeijins* are results of war, and remained unresolved for a long time since the war ended. PNLSC tries to gain the understanding of this situation by the courts and also by the Japanese government.

PNLSC hopes that the Japanese and Philippine governments would jointly recognize the stateless second generation *Nikkeijins* as children of the Japanese.

The Philippine Nikkei-jin Legal Support Center (PNLSC) is a Japanese non-profit organization established in 2003 as a direct outcome of the centennial anniversary of Japanese migration to the Philippines. It strongly advocates support both legally and socially to Philippine Nikkei-jins who were stricken with hardships during Second World War and the subsequent turmoil. It adheres to the belief that "Every person has a right to know her/his place of origin, which is one of the fundamental human rights."

For further information, please contact: PNLSC, Arai Bldg.3F, 4-15 Yotsuya Honshio-cho, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 160-0003 Japan, ph 813-3355-8861; fax 813-3355-8862; e-mail: info@pnlsc.com; www.pnlsc.com.

Endnote

- 1 See report at www.unhcr.org/ph/wp-content/uploads/sites/28/2021/05/Surge-Capacity-Project-Desk-Review.pdf.
- 2 Desk Review on Populations At Risk of Statelessness - Children of Philippine Descent in a Migratory Setting in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Countries and Persons of Japanese Descent, *ibid.*, pages 10-11.

Zindagii Shoista (Living with Dignity): An Experiment on Community-based Initiative on Violence Against Women and Girls

Subhiya Mastonshoeva, Shahribonu Shonasimova, Parvina Gulyamova, Rachel Jewkes, Nwabisa Shai, Esnat Chirwa, Henri Myrntinen

According to the Demographic and Health Survey of 2017 in Tajikistan, almost three quarters of women age 15 to 49 are married, with about half married by age 20. About a third of ever-married women age 15 to 49 have ever experienced physical, sexual, or emotional violence from their husband (IPV). Young and recently married women tend to be the most vulnerable; and they also may face violence from other members of their husband's family whose home they usually move to, such as their parents- and siblings-in-law.

Most cases of violence occur within the walls of the family home and never come to light because the social environment is highly patriarchal, with strong norms of respect for elders. The behavior of those who use violence is often condoned and to be a survivor is seen as shameful, as is reporting experiences to others. In essence, violence against women and girls (VAWG) is considered to be a private matter. This prevents survivors from seeking legal recourse, despite the legal protections that are in place, and the services that do exist. Although there are

no reliable national figures available for suicidality, research points to young women also being the most vulnerable group in this respect.

Zindagii Shoista

Zindagii Shoista (Living with Dignity),¹ an intervention developed to prevent VAWG, was implemented in four villages in Jomi and Penjikent districts of Tajikistan during the 2015-2018 period.

The intervention was developed to effect change through extended families, as units, and combined gender norm-change approaches with income-generating activities (IGAs). These drew in part on the Stepping Stones² and Creating Futures interventions³ that were developed initially for use in Africa, with significant modifications to address the needs particular to Tajikistan, especially for the IGA component.

The project was in many ways novel for both Tajikistan and the



greater Central Asian subregion because of its family-centered approach, its combination of economic empowerment and social norm-behavior change elements, and its focus not only on IPV but also violence driven by in-law dynamics, including various forms of physical, emotional and economic violence by in-laws. In Tajikistan, as in many countries in Asia, the family unit is not only a husband-wife dyad; it includes a more complex grouping of in-laws who may exploit and be violent towards younger daughters-in-law.

Survey

The intervention was evaluated in a study that was designed to assess the medium-term impact of *Zindagii Shoista*. Evaluation

was done through a research conducted over a period of almost three years. The data from the final assessment was compared to findings from three earlier data points: at the beginning of the intervention (0 months), mid-way through the intervention (8 months after its commencement) and at the end point of the intervention (15 months). The study population included younger and older women and younger and older men from project families in the four villages participating in the intervention. Two of the villages were in Penjikent district in the north of the country and two in Jomi district in the south. A standardized questionnaire was used for all interviews.

Some the results of the survey are discussed below.

The experience of emotional IPV in the past twelve months was reported by 28.1% of women at 30 months, and 32.3% at 15 months, compared to 64.5% at baseline. Experience of physical IPV was reported by 15.7% of women at 30 months, compared to 16.5% at 15 months and 44.9% at baseline. Indicators for men showed similarly low levels of perpetration of emotional

(6.4%) and physical (2.6%) IPV at 30 months, and 4.5% and 0% at 15 months, compared to 44.8% and 28.7% at baseline. Women's reported sexual IPV dropped from 21.8% to 15.3% at 8 months and a low of 3.8% at 15 months, at 30 months there was somewhat of an uptick 14.9% reported experiencing this, which is still less than half of the baseline rate. There was no quantitative indicator for economic IPV, but this was tracked through qualitative interviews and monitoring visits and was widely reported as having reduced. The intervention increased both women's own economic standing as well as that of their families, even though the family enterprises varied in their success and degree to which they were transformative of gender relations.

Men's reports of perpetration at 15 months were much lower than women's reports experiencing violence, with men reporting no perpetration (0%) of physical and sexual IPV. This might not have been the case, but it certainly reflected a new awareness that IPV is not acceptable. Nonetheless, there was a significant reduction in

violence reported by women at the end of the intervention, supported by qualitative findings, pointing to an overall reduction of IPV perpetrated by men and experienced by

women, even if men may have exaggerated the degree to which this reduction occurred.

One of the interview participants among the younger women group explained: "My husband does not hit me anymore, he consults with me when making decisions. Before [the intervention] my husband would not allow me to leave the house, now I can do many things outside the house independently. My neighbors in the village invite me to attend *marakas*⁴ and weddings." An older woman participant remarked: "We gathered some money from our small family business, and we sent my husband to Hajj.⁵ My husband has completely changed now. I do not know if this is because of the intervention or because he went to Mecca. He does not insult me at all now. He used to insult me due to my physical disability, calling me names. He is very kind to me now, we eat and drink tea together, it was not this way before."

The findings of the 30-month-post-baseline assessment showed that the positive impacts at the 15-month assessment were broadly sustained over the subsequent 15 months, even though intervention activities had ceased and the impact extended much beyond reductions in IPV. There were further decreases in severe food insecurity among women and men and in borrowing money for food, and a decrease in depression among women, as well as more equitable gender relations and attitudes, across the four timepoints: baseline, 8 months, 15 months, 30 months. There



was a little backsliding in women's earnings and savings at 30 months, that is, in the 15 months after the end of the project, as only 55.2% of women had earned in the prior 3 months, compared to 79.5% at 15 months (although the proportion was 23.9% at baseline), but women still perceived themselves to be far better across the board than they had been at baseline, before the intervention. The post-endline findings were also particularly significant given that data were collected at a time of the year when socioeconomic and other stress factors would have been high.

Lessons for Programming⁶

Zindagii Shoista shows that social norms and behavior change interventions combined with economic empowerment can have a significant impact on reducing VAWG. In addition to its impact on IPV, the program also contributed to the scarce evidence base around what works to prevent VAWG not only in couples but also by in-laws. This is especially important in Central and South Asian subregions, where family dynamics beyond the wife-husband dyad play a key role in VAWG and its prevention.

Adapting VAWG interventions to new contexts: *Zindagii Shoista* was carefully designed to the Tajik context, adapting the approach of a successful intervention previously used in South Africa and elsewhere. In turn, the *Zindagii Shoista* approach has been adapted for use elsewhere, including in Myanmar and Nepal. This shows that it is possible to adapt

VAWG prevention interventions that worked in one part of the world to another geographical and cultural context, but it requires extensive formative research, in-depth understanding of the local context, and collaborating with local partners.

Working with women, men and extended family: The formative research identified that a couples-approach would not be sufficient in Tajikistan as violence, especially against young women, is also perpetrated by in-laws. Hence, the program employed a broader family-centered approach that addressed VAWG in a holistic way, which was recognized as a key factor behind the significant reduction in VAWG.

Addressing multiple root causes of VAWG: The program was based on the premise that for changes to be sustained, VAWG interventions need to address multiple drivers of violence, which in this context meant economic stress factors, patriarchal norms and behaviors, and mental health. The combined economic and social empowerment approach effectively addressed these overlapping root causes of VAWG.

Ensure sufficient time for social and gender transformation to take place: The 15-month implementation period allowed family members to engage deeply with the social and economic empowerment sessions; learning, reflecting, and practicing new behaviors, knowledge and skills.

This appeared to be sufficient time for young women's engagement in IGAs to translate into higher status in the families, and for changes in relationships and power dynamics to unfold. Women reported that improved self-esteem and economic skills gave them more bargaining power in the family, and in-laws showed more respect and care towards younger women.

Training of facilitators: The careful selection and training of staff from local implementing organizations as facilitators, followed up by ongoing back-stopping support from dedicated, trained staff who could assist in dealing with unexpected challenges, were crucial to the success of the program.

Subhiya Mastonshoeva is an independent consultant who was working for International Alert in Tajikistan and led the research; Shahribonu Shonasimova is the country representative of International Alert in Tajikistan and overall project manager; Parvina Gulyamova was the project manager with CESVI in Tajikistan and led the income generating activities; Rachel Jewkes is the Executive Scientist of the South African Medical Research Council and was the Consortium Director of What Works to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls?; Nwabisa Shai is a Specialist Scientist at the South African Medical Research Council; Esnat Chirwa is a Specialist Statistician at the South African Medical Research Council and was the lead statistician for

What Works to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls?; Henri Myrntinen is an independent consultant with Gender Associations International Consulting and was the head of Gender & Peacebuilding for International Alert.

For further information, please contact: Shahribonu Shonasimova, International Alert, Rudaki Avenue, 70/48, Dushanbe 734025, Tajikistan; ph +992 37 2273139; email: sshonasimova@international-alert.org.

Endnotes

- 1 *Zindagii Shoista* was implemented by International Alert and Cesvi, with local partners ATO, Farodis and Zanon Sharq (Women of the Orient) as part of the global What Works to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls programme funded by DFID and headed by the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC).
- 2 See www.whatworks.co.za/resources/item/467-zindagii-shoista-living-with-dignity-workshopmanual.
- 3 For more information, see www.whatworks.co.za/resources/item/540-zindagii-shoista-living-with-dignity-workshopmanual-part-2 and

What Works to Prevent Violence, Creating Futures – Facilitator Manual, www.whatworks.co.za/resources/item/487-creating-futures-facilitatormanual. The manuals were translated into both Tajik and Uzbek.

- 4 *Maraka* – traditional ceremonies such as weddings and funerals.
- 5 Pilgrimage to Mecca
- 6 This section is taken from Programme Summary - *Zindagii Shoista*, Tajikistan, UN Women, www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/respect-implementation-guide-programme-summary-zindagii-shoista-en.pdf?la=en&vs=3634.

Human Rights Museums: Kaohsiung City of Taiwan

(Continued from page 5)

promote understanding of human rights, enabling ordinary people (rather than elites) to become true partners in the human rights dialogue, producing human rights innovation and the emergence of a truly harmonious human rights culture.

Elsa Wen-Ying Hsu is an Associate Professor at the Open University of Kaohsiung, in Kaohsiung city, Taiwan.

For further information, please contact: Elsa Wen-Ying Hsu, Open University of Kaohsiung, e-mail: wyhsu@ouk.edu.tw, website: <http://ilms.ouk.edu.tw/wyhsu>.

References

- Hsu, Wen-Ying (2012). *Kaohsiung Human Rights Travel Guide*. Kaohsiung, Taiwan: Kaohsiung City Government.
- Houjing Cultural Hall. <https://heritage.khcc.gov.tw/>.
- Kaohsiung Museum of History. <http://khm.org.tw/>.
- Kaohsiung Museum of Labor. <https://kml.kcg.gov.tw/>.
- War and Peace Memorial Park and Theme Hall. <http://warpeace.khm.org.tw/>.

petitions, demonstrations, and strikes. Some protestors were fired on by government forces. At the same time, a new wave of violence broke out between native Taiwanese and mainland immigrants. Following the outbreak of this violence, the Taiwan Garrison Command quickly declared martial law and dispatched forces to patrol the streets and arrest or shoot anyone they found breaking the curfew. At the same time, the authorities on Taiwan requested assistance from the mainland to launch a large-scale repression.

- 2 During the 228 Incident, government forces attacked the Kaohsiung City Hall, the main train station, and Kaohsiung Senior High School. Many groups used Kaohsiung Senior High School as a stronghold against the army crackdown. Students at the school formed a self-defense corps despite the urgings of headmaster and other teachers not to do so. Students

Endnotes

- 1 On 27 February 1947, a dispute arose following the confiscation of contraband cigarettes from a seller in Taipei. The next day, the public organized large-scale

from the Kaohsiung Industrial High School and Kaohsiung Commercial High School also joined the corps, which defended the school campus and protected innocent mainlanders. Since the student self-defense

corps had insufficient weapons and ammunition, it suffered heavy casualties in the fighting. Government forces launched mortar attacks on the campus, which damaged school buildings. Today, a number of

shell holes can still be found in the red-bricked walls of the school.

Liberation War Museum

(Continued from page 7)

and came up with several publications.

The CSGJ organizes the International Conference on Genocide and Justice, the last one being held in 2019.

Digital Thread Exhibit

Created in association with a group of Harvard University Asia Center students, and designers, the Thread Exhibit is an online exhibition dedicated to sharing the story of the Rohingya community and lifting their voices to a global audience. The exhibit combines the power of arts and technology to raise awareness of the persecuted Rohingya community.

Regular Programs of the Museum

The Museum holds yearlong activities commemorating historical events in Bangladesh and other countries including Mass Upsurge Day in January 1969, Shaheed Sergeant Zahurul Hoque Remembrance Day (15 February), International Mother Language Day (21 February), Muktir Utsab (any

day between January-March), Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's Birth Anniversary (17 March), LWM Foundation Day (22 March), Independence Day program (22-27 March), Anniversary of Jalladkhana Killing Field Site, Mirpur (21 June), Birth Anniversary of Tajuddin Ahmed (23 July), Hiroshima Day (6 August), Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's Death Anniversary (10-31 August), World Non-Violence Day (2 October), International Genocide Remembrance Day (9 December) and Human Rights Day (10 December).

Impact, Challenges and Reflections on the Future

This year the Museum is observing the 25th anniversary of its establishment. This private museum has over the years become a people's institution and this strong bondage with the community is the source of its strength. With the construction of a new building, the Museum has offered to many more people its services. The Museum can undertake different programs because of the voluntary involvement of people from various sectors including the youth. The Trustees have initiated a journey

with limited resource at a rented place and now with the construction of the permanent house, a dream has been fulfilled. It is imperative to give it a solid foundation. The Museum has established links with similar institutions and efforts in the region and beyond. It is ready to offer its services to willing partners and make it another hub of memorialization and peace activity in the region.

The challenge lies in creating this strong bond and in handing over the Museum to the youth of today, so that the memory becomes inter-generational and the journey towards building a better future for all continues.

Mofidul Hoque is the Founder Trustee of the Liberation War Museum and the Director of its Center for the Study of Genocide and Justice.

For further information, please contact: Liberation War Museum, F11/A & F11/B, Sher-e Bangla Nagar, Civic Centre, Agargaon, Dhaka, Bangladesh, ph 882-9142781-3 (PABX); 88-09611677223, 882-9142780; e-mail:mukti.jadughar@gmail.com; www.liberationwarmuseumbd.org.

HURIGHTS OSAKA Calendar

The 11th volume of *Human Rights Education in Asia-Pacific* will contain articles from Australia, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, and Japan. There will hopefully be articles from West and Central Asia and the Pacific in this forthcoming volume.



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.

Sender: HURIGHTS OSAKA

(Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Center)

8F, CE Nishihonmachi Bldg., 1-7-7 Nishihonmachi, Nishi-ku, Osaka 550-0005
Japan

Phone: (816) 6543-7002

Fax: (816) 6543-7004

E-mail: webmail@hurights.or.jp

Website: www.hurights.or.jp



HURIGHTS OSAKA