

**ACTIVITY REPORT
FOR FISCAL YEAR 2013**

**FROM 1st APRIL 2013
TO 31st MARCH 2014**

**INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL SERVICE JAPAN
(ISSJ)**

Activity Report
For Fiscal Year 2013

International Social Service Japan (ISSJ)

This report covers the activities carried out by International Social Service Japan (ISSJ) during the year from April 1, 2013 to March 31, 2014.

ISSJ started inter-country adoption for children born between U.S. soldiers of occupation forces and Japanese women in 1952 under the name of the Japan-American Joint Committee for the Assistance of Orphans. Having authorized by the Ministry of Health and Welfare (at that time) in 1959, social welfare corporation International Social Service Japan was born. Since then, ISSJ, for over 60 years, has been engaged in international social welfare services such as conducting inter-country adoptions, assistance for parent-child visitation or contacts across the border after the break-up of international marriage, assistance for minors for family reunion over the national boundaries, counseling for asylum seekers and assistance for medical care arrangement and literacy education for street children and their mothers' self-reliance support in Cambodia.

In the world these days, disputes among nations break out and there are conflicts arising from the difference of the races, the religion religions and the credos, etc. ISSJ has been asked for advice by the children from underprivileged homes, or requested for counseling by the refugees torn asunder from their families, or by the people who have family problems due to the failure of international marriage.

Under the slogan of Caring Hands over the National Boundaries, ISSJ professional social workers make the utmost effort to settle problems regardless of the race, the nationality, the religion, the credo, the sexuality and so on.

ISSJ's activities over the half-century have been supported by donations and voluntary subscriptions from well-meaning persons and, still now our organization is being supported by the subsidies and grants-in-aid of the funding bodies such as JKA Foundation (bicycle races), Nippon Foundation, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Tokyo Masonic Association, Community Chest, Postal Savings for International Voluntary Aid, etc., and the donations of the firm members such as Toyo Wharf & Warehouse Co., Ltd. Jissen Rinri, Mitsubishi Materials Corporation, etc. and of many individual members. In addition, we receive support and cooperation from Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Family Court, Child Guidance Center, Child Welfare Institution, Refugee Assistance Headquarters (RHQ), Forum for Refugees Japan (FRJ), etc. We all would like to sincerely thank you all of you who have been supporting ISSJ.

ISSJ is receiving the requests for consultation from the people of more than 50 countries in the world, to every one of which we will continue to give our full attention.

1. Assistance for Inter-country Adoption

Inter-country adoption service subsidized by JKA (formerly Japan Keirin Association) is the activity that made a start of ISSJ. ISSJ's inter-country adoption is the adoption to form relationships between adopted children and adoptive parents whose nationalities are cross-national. Adoption services include Special Adoption, Regular Adoption (mainly relative adoption), and Inter-country Adoption which places children to prospective adoptive parents living outside of Japan.

We handled three matching cases of inter-country adoption (excluding relative adoption) in 2013 all of which were referred by child guidance center that asked for possibility of inter-country adoption. The first case was a matching of an 8-year-old boy with an Australian couple living in Japan. He had been taken care of at a children's home. The second case was a matching of an 8-year-old boy with an American couple living in the U.S. He also had been taken care of at a children's home. The third case was a matching of brothers (a 6-year-old boy and a 5-year-old boy) with an American couple living in the U.S. They had been taken care of separately in different children's homes. As for the first case, a prospective adoptive father was a high school English teacher and a prospective adoptive mother was an assistant English teacher at public elementary and junior high school but left her job after child placement. Since the adoptive mother was fluent in Japanese she was building a good relationship to support the child with the local elementary school and the child guidance center. This couple faced the child's testing behavior at first but gradually succeeded in gaining his trust. As for the second case, a prospective adoptive father who had experience of studying in Japan and a good command of Japanese wished to adopt a child from Japan, his favorite country. After the couple took the child back to the US the behavioral problem of the child occurred due to a sense of loss he felt by leaving Japan and a change of his circumstances. However, now, thanks to the support of social workers and therapist of local adoption agency the boy and the prospective adoptive parents could recover their composure. The prospective adoptive father of the third case was a Japanese-American and the adoptive mother was a Filipino American, and neither of them could understand Japanese at all. At first, the adoption of only an elder brother by this couple was proceeded with the cooperation of child guidance center and children's home, but we strongly wished to place the brothers together to this couple and encouraged the child guidance center and the children's homes to consider the possibility of placement of brothers together to this couple. Then, after four months of adjustment and preparation period the brothers were placed together to this couple.

The children placed for inter-country adoption this year by ISSJ were those who had been living in children's home for many years because foster parents could not be found or adoption was not realized in Japan. On the concept of finding a permanent family for children whose birth parents could not raise them, ISSJ, child guidance center and children's home worked together to realize these child placements. In the trend of international child welfare placement to the same foster parents and adoption with the same adoptive parents should be considered primarily for siblings.

However, in Japan, siblings are still placed to a different children's home or foster parents and they are often adopted by different adoptive parents. It is necessary that those who support children should make efforts to avoid the loss of contact with their siblings for them who had to being separated from their birth parents. ISSJ would like to do our best to find a permanent family for many children as possible in the area of the assistance for inter-country adoption cooperating with child guidance centers, baby homes, children's homes, etc.

As part of our activity subsidized by JKA, we conducted questionnaire survey to local child guidance centers, children's homes and baby homes. Its objective was to familiarize ISSJ's activity. We would like to continue to enlighten the people of child guidance centers and children's homes in charge to consider inter-country-adoption as a last resort for children who have failed to be placed to permanent families in Japan.

2. Assistance for Family Reunion over the National Boundaries

This project has been carried out with a grant from the Nippon Foundation.

Along with the break-up of marital relationship of Japanese woman married internationally in the U.S. the cases in which a Japanese parent takes the child back to Japan without the consent of the spouse were covered widely in the U.S. media around 2011. In such situations, in January 2014, the Government of Japan signed and concluded the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. For the cases in which a parent takes the child back to Japan, a parent whose child is removed can make application for assistance concerning the return of the child and the visitation or contacts to the child. It was decided that ISSJ, as a Visitation or Contacts Supporting Agency, would assist the parties concerned at their request by arranging an interview between child and left parents and having dialog between taking parents and left parents. In this regard, ISSJ, the Ministry of the Foreign Affairs which assumes the role of Central Authority of Japan under the Hague Convention, Bar Association which assumes Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Institution and other Visitation or Contacts Supporting Agency are sharing opinions on details of the procedure as well as conducting trainings. ISSJ hopes that along with the effectuation of the Hague Convention, children in remaining apart from the other parent will be able to contact both parents as their natural right.

Based on the idea that children have a right to maintain relationship with both parents and their healthy development cannot be made without such relationship, ISSJ assists parents, who can neither make contact with nor visit their children because of not only the issue related to child abduction but for some other reasons, to make contact again with their children.

As more and more people are moving globally to work abroad these days there are many cases in which foreign women meet partners and get married in Japan. However, some of them who reside

illegally give births without being married. In this case, a child who is born from a single foreign woman in Japan shall obtain the mother's nationality since Japan does not recognize the birthplace principle. Some mothers do not report the births of their children at the respective embassies in fear of being found out about their undocumented statuses, and in consequence, their child's birth registration is ignored and the child's birth certificate is left not being submitted. Some mothers leave their child with acquaintances and disappear. ISSJ works with Embassies and child guidance centers to search for missing mothers and to facilitate the child's birth registration as well as the child's repatriation for the purpose of family reunification.

3. Financial Assistance for Refugees, Refugee-Status Applicants and Children not Placed on Family Registry

ISSJ receives funding from the Masonic Foundation of Japan every year and this year ISSJ gives financial assistance for medical, living and school expenses to Myanmar families from a refugee camp in Thailand who came to Japan under a United Nations' third-country resettlement program, refugees and asylum seekers. ISSJ also assists stateless children who are born in Japan and cannot submit the Report of Birth to the child's country of origin to obtain a Birth Certificate, citizenship, passport and visa with the help of Japanese government and the government of their country of origin. We also help refugee children to provide livelihood and schooling support.

Especially, the refugees resettled in Japan from refugee camps must live independently after the termination of support from the Japanese government and there were some cases that require counseling by social worker. There was a married couple who needed counseling to maintain marital relationship because of the difference of the speed of adapting themselves to social life in Japan between the husband and the wife. Also, since both parent and child had been living in refugee camp some of them had no experience of going to school or working so that ISSJ social worker helped the child to acquire the habit of studying while attending the child. Refugee-status applicants have many difficulties too. Since they get no working-visa they live on the road or get no medical treatment when they become ill because they have difficulty of paying their medical fee or rent. Therefore, ISSJ assists those people and depending of urgent needs, ISSJ gives them financial assistance for their medical and living expenses with aid from the Masonic Foundation of Japan.

4. Casework Service for Refugees and Refugee-Status Applicants

The word "refugee" is often used in many different situations, but the actual meaning is someone who "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that

country.” Globally, those who have been recognized as refugees in the first half of the year 2013 (from January to June) was 1.5 million persons, and has already exceeded the number of that in 2012 full-year of 1.1 million persons, because of the conflicts such as in Syria. Those seeking for asylum in Japan has also increased rapidly, the number being 3,260 persons in 2013.

ISSJ implements counseling support services for asylum seekers, such as securing access to psychiatric treatment, providing psycho-social counseling, and visiting detention centers, which is commissioned by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Those who we supported in 2013 were approximately 200 persons, and an extent of 29 nationalities. The main nationalities were Sri Lanka (15%), Iran (11%), Bangladesh (8%), and Nigeria (8%). Regarding psychiatric treatment, we connected those who could not receive national health insurance to medical facilities, and covered medication fees and long term medical fees. We provided counseling by phone calls and at the ISSJ office and home visits, giving information and advice for those concerning health and daily living issues. We visited the Eastern Japan immigration center (in Ushiku, Ibaraki prefecture) twice a month meeting with 7 persons per visit on average, and the Tokyo immigration bureau (in Shinagawa, Tokyo) once a month meeting with a few persons.

In addition to the above implementations, we conducted group therapy 7 times for Myanmar refugee women who have settled in Japan. Although they seem to be living with no difficulty since they can write and speak Japanese, feelings of anxiety and discomfort towards life in a different country and culture, especially regarding child rearing and their social life, constantly hovers over them. Most of the women who participated in the group therapy sessions were mothers, and they confessed about their common distresses.

Finally, we hosted workshops on deepening understandings of refugees (5 times in total) in regards to capacity building. For the first 3 times we focused on psychiatric disorders that refugees tend to develop, where a psychiatrist and clinical psychologist gave lectures on the basic symptoms, ways of handling as an aid provider, and case examples. For the latter 2 times, a university professor lectured on multicultural social work. In addition, ISSJ staff also shared field experiences as a lecturer.

Apart from the implementations commissioned by the UNHCR, there have been increasing consultations from refugees and asylum seekers, especially those regarding medical issues. Since issues outside of mental health is not covered, we provided support utilizing our own network and social work expertise. There is still only a few studies in Japan on psycho social support for refugees and asylum seekers, and there is yet to accumulate further knowledge. We hope to keep in mind that we are at the front-line, and continue to contribute further support for refugees by improving our assistance skills and reinforcing our networks.

◆ Counseling at the Ushiku and Shinagawa Detention Centers> ◆

There is no end of refugees escaping to Japan, for reasons of political, religious, racial discrimination and others. There are many asylum seekers who cannot receive a visa, and have to live under an unstable position such as provisional release for a few years until their result of refugee status is given. Some can be detained in the detention centers in Ushiku City, Ibaraki prefecture or Shinagawa, for some kind of reason. There are some cases where they are restrained at the airport and sent directly to a detention center. In such cases, the client is placed in a swirl of anxiety since they are detained without any living experiences in Japan, no Japanese acquaintances and no understanding of Japanese circumstances, and has not acquired the Japanese language which can be a means of communication.

At ISSJ, we visit the detention centers of the immigration bureau in Ushiku City, Ibaraki prefecture and Shinagawa-ku, Tokyo about 2 to 3 times per month, meeting with 6 to 8 persons per visit. During the visit, we provide counseling for asylum seekers, listen to the client's worries, check the client's background and current / family situations, and focus especially on their mental and physical health.

Many of the clients already carry stress through escaping their country, and develop further health issues both mental and physical as their detention prolongs. In many cases, the many stresses come out as physical symptoms such as headaches and stomach aches, back problems and chest pains, high blood pressure, insomnia, constipation and diarrhea, vomiting. We not only listen to the client's many issues including their health issues and provide counseling through visitation, but also communicate through phone and letters. In addition, there are cases where one develops more severe psychiatric symptoms such as hallucinations and delusions, self-injurious behaviors and alcoholism by carrying trauma and mental distress from their experiences in their country. We consult with professionals and medical specialists when necessary, and provide information as well as referrals. We also provide everyday necessities such as shampoo and detergent, since many clients in the detention center do not have enough money on them. In addition, we provide stationary as well as telephone cards and postal stamps so that they can communicate with their family abroad and friends outside the detention center, lawyers and guarantors. We hope to continue to provide support so that clients can relieve even a little of their stress inside the detention centers.

◆ Training regarding Refugee's Mental Health Issues ◆

During the fiscal year 2013, we hosted a 5 series workshops on furthering understanding of refugees as a means of capacity building for assisting refugees, at Taisho University where the space was provided for free. We invited professionals as lecturers and put focus on mental health and social work which is crucial in assisting refugees. Those who attended were people who work daily with refugees in the field of welfare and healthcare, researchers, NGO workers who provide support, students interested in refugees, and working adults. In the first 3 sessions, a psychiatrist and clinical psychologist lectured on psychiatric disorders which refugees may likely develop;

depression, schizophrenia, psychosomatic disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), etc., in addition to providing case studies. In the latter 2 sessions, a professor from a social welfare related university lectured on multicultural social work, and an ISSJ social worker also shared knowledge accumulated through fieldwork. Mostly the same people attended each sessions, and all listened eagerly.

The refugee assistance provided by ISSJ bases on social work, and centers in psycho social support. The majority of our refugee clients are asylum seekers, and they suffer from complicated past experiences and trauma, and are tormented by the fear of detention or deportation, as well as poverty and hardship even in Japan. Many of those who have detention experiences may develop psychiatric disorders from prison reaction, and continue to need treatment even after they are released. In situations where verbal communication is limited, non-verbal communication cues can be a large proportion of communication, which we sense from the client's speech and behavior, expression, and living situations, and sensing accurately requires professional knowledge.

For each session, there were about 20 persons participating as a seminar, there were many opportunities to ask questions, and opportunities for group case examinations. We do regret that we were not able to advertise enough in advance, but according to the questionnaires conducted after each sessions, the level of satisfaction of the participants were high, and it was well received. We hope to continue to improve our expertise and to provide effective refugee support.

5. Training of International Social Workers

◆ Training Program in Cambodia ◆

ISSJ has been providing livelihood support to refugees since the assistance for Indo-Chinese refugees conducted 30 years ago. In 1996, ISSJ established a daycare center for children living in slum area called "Phtea Nhor Nhim" in Phnom Penh and started training Cambodian social workers. Since 2007, with the donation from International Voluntary Aid of Management Organization for Postal Savings and Postal Life Insurance, ISSJ has been providing literacy education for street children from poor families and self-sustainability training for mothers.

Following last year, five Cambodian staff members offer basic education of read & write and health education with breakfast, lunch and snack to about 70 children. The ISSJ social workers visited Cambodia three times this year, and interviewed children and visited their home with Cambodian staff members and gave advice on the programs. We make contact with the local staff members by phone and E-mail every month, and are getting able to cultivate trust and share values of working for the children with local staff members every time ISSJ social workers visit Cambodia. Three Cambodian young persons, who got training at vocational school under the educational sponsorship program started last year, work in a restaurant and a beauty shop so that they start making a step toward becoming independent. We believe our steady assistance leads to the hope of Cambodian

children. Cambodia has just started to tackle the issue of education and welfare but children grow up regardless of development of public assistance. “Phtea Nhor Nhim” will be registered as local NGO in March 2014. ISSJ continues to provide assistance to the project so that the Cambodian staff members will be able to take a leading part financially as well as in the aspect of administration. ISSJ had been receiving allocation of Postal Savings for International Voluntary Aid from 1991 to 2013 so that we could continue our welfare activities in Cambodia. ISSJ would like to express our deepest gratitude.

6. Participation in International Conferences

◆ Participation in Yokohama International Forum ◆

ISSJ held a course of lectures on the theme of “Refugees as our neighborhood” at Yokohama International Forum held from February 8th to 9th. Based on the experience of ISSJ that has been providing counseling services and assistance to refugees and refugee-status applicants for a long time we explained social and psychological difficulties they are facing and the concept of support for them.

◆ Conference under the theme of “Adoption Facing a Turning Point” ◆

A conference named “Adoption Facing a Turning Point ~Happy Family for Every Child” was held on October 29 at conference room in the First Members’ Office Building of the Lower House. The conference was hosted by Japan Adoption Agencies Association set up on September 10, 2013, of which ISSJ has become a member, in order to increase social recognition of fair adoption aiming at child’s welfare, provide information to those who could be rescued by adoption, accumulate assistance skills, exchange information and work together with related organizations.

During the conference, the participants also shared opinions on “Proposal for Adoption Service Law”, which is now under consideration. A lot of media came to the conference to cover the discussion so that it provided a good opportunity to make more people understand that adoption is one of the alternative means of care for child in need of protection from the viewpoint of child welfare.

7. Communications and Public Affairs

◆ ISSJ Charity Movie Festival ◆

ISSJ held Charity Movie Festivals in June and October at Hitotsubashi Hall, Jinbo-cho for the purpose of increasing the public understanding on ISSJ and also fund-raising. ISSJ’s event committee and volunteers have been carrying on this event for more than 30 years. For each event, core members of 7 or 8 volunteers came to ISSJ office for three months before the movie festival and

had prepared for it. The films showed in June and October were “Oranges and Sunshine” and “The Artist”. The gross earnings from tickets, bazaar, contributions, advertising, etc. were ¥2,676,614 (The 66th) and ¥2,418,260 (The 67th) respectively. The numbers of tickets sold were 2,383 and 2,055 respectively. The numbers of visitors were 1,414 and 1,089. In selecting the film, specialized agencies, such as the Tokyu Recreation Co. and Iwanami Hall provided advice and cooperation.

In the current fiscal year of 2013, ISSJ Movie Festival received support from the following companies and the organizations: Iwanami Hall, Shimura Church, Pilot International Sakura Tokyo, TAISEI Corporation, Tokyo Zonta Club, Nagase Kenko Corporation, Japan Women’s University Library Friendship Association, the Tokyo Keihin Rotary Club, the Tokyo Ohi Rotary Club, Toyo Wharf & Warehouse Co., Ltd., the Tohyama Kaisei Co. and Harasawa Pharmaceutical Co., Ltd.

◆ Making a DVD introducing ISSJ’s Assistance for Inter-Country Adoption ◆

A DVD introducing ISSJ’s assistance for inter-country adoption was made by the subsidy from JKA this year to make related organizations and parties concerned as well as general public deepen understanding on the assistance for inter-country adoption that ISSJ has been conducting for over 60 years.

◆ Publication of Newsletter “Intercountry” ◆

Newsletter “Intercountry” was published twice this year to introduce ISSJ’s services and activities as well as to make people understand the actual situation of child welfare in Japan. ISSJ distributed this “Intercountry” to related organizations and individuals that are helping and supporting ISSJ’s activities.



DATA**Breakdown of the Casework Service**

Casework Service During Fiscal Year 2013	Number of Cases
Cases newly received during this fiscal year	671
Cases newly opened during this fiscal year	145
Cases re-opened during this fiscal year	10
Cases continued from previous fiscal year	370
Grand total of cases during this fiscal year	1196

Number of Casework Service According to Main Categories of Cases

Subject	Number of Counseling	Number of Cases
Inter-country adoption/Foster care	3561	585
Counseling for international marriage/divorce	88	13
Nationality problems	282	25
Acknowledgement of children	14	7
Child abuse/Child care problems	166	6
Repatriation cases	75	11
Procedure for staying in Japan	136	22
Reunion with family	306	38
Welfare administration	7	6
Mental problems	23	7
Problems regarding medical treatment	5	7
Job hunting	0	14
Education of Japanese language	0	0
Locating missing persons	39	3
Problems of education	0	2
Inheritance	8	2
Translation/preparation of documents	5	1
Providing of information	66	25
Criminal cases	0	0
Assistance for adjustment of living	0	2
Formation of the staff	0	0
Refugee Problems	2224	396
Abduction	113	7
Others	11	17
Total	7129	1196

Countries Involved in the Cases

The following 74 countries and area are involved in the cases during this fiscal year:

Afghanistan	Angola	Australia	Austria	Bangladesh
Belgium	Brazil	Brunei	Cambodia	Cameroon
Canada	Chile	China	Colombia	Congo
Cote d'Ivoire	Croatia	Czech	Ecuador	Ethiopia
Fiji	France	Gambia	Germany	Ghana
Guatemala	Guinea	India	Indonesia	Iran
Italy	Korea	Kosovo	Laos	Liberia
Malawi	Malaysia	Mali	Moldova	Morocco
Myanmar	Nepal	Netherlands	New Zealand	Niger
Nigeria	Pakistan	Paraguay	Peru	Philippines
Portuguese	Romania	Russian	Rwanda	Saudi Arabia
Senegal	Singapore	Somalia	Spain	Sri Lanka
Sudan	Switzerland	Syria	Taiwan	Tanzania
Thailand	Tibet	Turkey	Uganda	UK
Ukraine	USA	Venezuela	Vietnam	

Organizations that Referred Clients to ISSJ

During this fiscal year there were 671 cases of newly accepted casework service.

The organizations that referred cases to our assistance are as follows:

Organizations which Referred Cases to ISSJ		Number of Cases
Foreign Government Offices/Embassies		129
Japanese Government Offices	Related Ministries, Prefectures, Municipals	14
	Japanese Embassies in foreign countries	2
	Family Court	4
	Child Guidance Center, Welfare Office, Health Center	16
	Regional Immigration Bureau, Police	2
U.S. Military concerned (Family Service Office, Legal Office on base, etc.)		1
International organizations such as U.N, etc.		18
Medical institutions		2
Schools, Churches, NGO		20
Publications, Mass media, ISS publicity		245
Lawyers		9
Friends/acquaintances/families/the person himself(or herself)		119
ISS branches and correspondents		9
Others		81
Total		671

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