

**ACTIVITY REPORT  
FOR FISCAL YEAR 2012**

**FROM 1<sup>st</sup> APRIL 2012  
TO 31<sup>st</sup> MARCH 2013**

**INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL SERVICE JAPAN  
(ISSJ)**

# Activity Report For Fiscal Year 2012

## International Social Service Japan (ISSJ)

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This report covers the activities carried out by International Social Service Japan (ISSJ) during the year from April 1, 2012 to March 31, 2013.

The year 2012 was still affected variously by the earthquake disaster on March 11, 2011. 241 children lost their parents by the earthquake as of March 28, 2012, and 1372 children lost either of their parents, and many of them have been cared by their grandparents or relatives. Lately, the trend of nuclear families had been increasing but the movement to rediscover the family ties was spurred. In such a situation, ISSJ was counted on and 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.

In 1952, ISSJ began counseling services and supports on the problems that can be solved through the coordination of two or more countries, regardless of the nationality, the race, the religion, the principle, the sexuality and so on, 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.

ISSJ's activities over the half-century have been supported by donations and voluntary subscriptions from many well-meaning persons and, at the same time our organization is being supported by the subsidies and grants-in-aid of the funding bodies such as JKA Foundation (Keirin 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 are getting large support from Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Family Court, Child Guidance Center, Children's Home, etc. We would like to sincerely thank 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. We appreciate your continuing support and cooperation for our activities.

## 1. Assistance for Intercountry Adoption

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Inter-country Adoption Service subsidized by JKA (formerly Japan Keirin Association) is one of the main activities for ISSJ. “Inter-country Adoption” is an adoption to form relationships between adoptive children and adoptive parents whose nationalities are cross-national. Adoption services include “Special Adoption,” “Regular Adoption,” (mainly relative adoption) and “Inter-country Adoption,” which place children to prospective adoptive parents living outside of Japan.

Since nationalities of adoptive parents and children are different, requirements of adoption of both countries must be met. Once adoption is finalized, adoption needs to be reported to both countries in order to have it acknowledged by each country. Termination of relationship with birth parents and child and forming of relationship with adoptive parents and child are essential to protect the welfare of both parties, adoptive parents, adopted child, and birth parents.

Once ISSJ receives an application from prospective adoptive parents, ISSJ provides inclusive services, such as orientation, home study, approval and registration of prospective adoptive parents, placement, supervision of adjustment of child with adoptive parents, court petition, and report of adoption.

ISSJ social workers assist a whole process described above in case prospective adoptive parents reside in Japan. If prospective adoptive parents reside outside of Japan, ISSJ expects a licensed adoption agency in their state/country to conduct home study, supervise post placement period, and send adjustment reports to ISSJ, and to assist petition to a court in their state/country.

Once a child is matched with prospective adoptive parents, ISSJ makes an arrangement with a child welfare agency and assists their application for a child’s visa to their country. After a child enters to a country of the prospective adoptive parents, their licensed agency follows up the whole adoption process described above. When the adoption decree is issued from a country of prospective adoptive parents, ISSJ submit the report of adoption to a ward office where a child’s legal domicile is located in Japan. By the submission of report of birth, the relationship with birth parents and child is terminated.

ISSJ prioritize local placement rather than inter-country placement, which is less stressful for a child. Inter-country adoption, which places a child to prospective adoptive parents living outside of Japan should be considered as a last resort in terms of child welfare. However, adoptive parents and adopted child could live with generous support from the

community which adoption is widely accepted. ISSJ would like to do our best to find a permanent family for children who have failed to be placed to permanent families under the Japanese social welfare system.

## **2 . Assistance for Family Reunion over the National Boundaries**

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

ISSJ has many cases of family issues related to migration and people working abroad as well as international marriage and divorce as the society becomes more internationalized. For example, foreign women give births in Japan while working and living in Japan. A child who is born from foreign parents in Japan must obtain the parents' nationality, because Japan does not recognize the birthplace principle when it comes to nationality. If the foreign mother is married to Japanese man, the child can obtain double nationalities. If the foreign mother is single, the mother has to report the birth of the child at the local office in Japan and later report the birth at the embassy of the mother's country. In this way, the child can obtain the nationality and the passport of the mother's country and can apply for residential permit in Japan. However, in some cases, mothers do not have residential permit, or visa to stay in Japan. In this case, some mothers do not report the births of their children at the respective embassies in fear of being found out about their undocumented statuses. When ISSJ is referred this kind of case, it is usually after some years of the children's births. People around the child realize the failed birth registration by the child's limited access to social resources such as health insurance and child allowance. ISSJ works with Philippine Embassy and Child Guidance Centers across Japan to facilitate the child's birth registration as well as the child's repatriation for the purpose of family reunification and assistance for child's learning opportunities as needed.

We cannot overlook the issues of children in relation to international marriage and divorce. ISSJ sometimes get referrals of child abduction by internationally married couples when taking parents bring children to Japan. Some of them are already divorced and others are still in the marriage. Just this year the Japanese congresses started discussion on the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. Yet, until the law becomes effective, Japan cannot order the parent to return the child to the original country. In ISSJ, social workers educate the taking parents about the Hague Convention and try to work things out. Social workers also look for the best interest of the child by having dialogue with taking parents and left parents and sometimes with the child themselves.

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

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ISSJ receives funding from the Masonic Foundation of Japan every year and has been able to assist financially refugees, asylum seekers and children who are not placed on the family registry. 3,342 asylum seekers were rejected their refugee application and filed an objection and were waiting for examination as of the end of December 2012. Many of them came to Japan with short-stay resident status and continue staying in Japan illegally without working visa. They are in extreme poverty and cannot pay medical expenses. When they get ill they can not go to hospital so that their illness becomes severe. Even after they were recognized as refugees it is very difficult for them to earn enough income in Japan due to language problem, lack of expertise or qualification, etc. ISSJ assists those people, and 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**

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ISSJ provides counseling as psychosocial support to those applying for refugee status, commissioned by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). People applying for refugee status, refers to those who have applied and gone through the procedure at the Immigration Bureau of Japan to be approved as a refugee, and currently waiting for the results. Unless those applying for refugee status do not receive a special permission to stay or provisional stay from the Immigration Bureau, they can be detained in the immigration detention center. ISSJ visits mainly the Tokyo Immigration Center (Shinagawa, Tokyo) and the East Japan Immigration Center (Ushiku, Ibaraki) to provide counseling for those detained. In the fiscal year of 2012, the overall number of visits were 25 times, and 227 cases were provided of counseling. The subject persons were mainly from South Asia (32%), Africa (32%), and the Middle East (22%). In addition, the three top nationalities were Sri Lanka (22%), Iran (16%), and Nigeria (11%). 79 people were male and 5 people female. The highest proportion of people were between 18 to 59 years old for both male and female, and within this age range 73 people were male and 4 people female. There were no interviews held with those detained under age this year, but were provided of support outside the detention centers.

ISSJ also continues to conduct consultation services outside the detention center. There are many cases where the client gets ill in the detention center, and comes to ISSJ to consult on their health issues since they need continuous treatment. There are other cases where the

clients managed to get by outside the detention center, due to their stressful situation, they come to consult on their health issues after some time has passed. In these cases, ISSJ provides counseling, and connects them to hospitals (mainly psychiatric) or other professionals when necessary, and accompanies them to the hospital.

In addition, ISSJ is a member of the Forum for Refugees Japan (FRJ). This year, ISSJ has been providing support for mainly daily living to those applying for refugee status and those with temporary protection visas whom the Japanese government accepted through a program as alternatives to detention.

Finally, ISSJ has started capacity building activities aiming to those living permanently in Japan as recognized refugees in the refugee communities. In particular, ISSJ has been conducting group counseling for the refugee communities living permanently in Japan. In addition, ISSJ invited a presenter from overseas, to conduct a workshop on psychosocial support for refugees, to the supporters of refugees.

We hope to continue collaborating with other organizations and related persons, understanding the needs of refugees from various perspectives and continue to provide support.

### **Counseling at Ushiku and Shinagawa**

It is said that there are roughly 50 million refugees in the world. They give up their native countries and flee across borders, since they cannot live in dread of the persecutions that develop from the struggles on politics, religions and racism, or since their nations are not safe to live due to the environmental degradations or armed conflicts.

If the world's population is estimated to be 5 billion, one out of every hundred could be a refugee in a calculated rate. Refugees are surprisingly close to us.

Only small parts of people among them come to Japan (number of refugee-applicants in 2012: 1900).

However, on a charge of overstaying or by a breach of work rules, the number of people who get arrested and sent to the Immigration is swelling up from year to year.

In spite of their coming to Japan all the way for asylum, many of them are taken into custody at Detention Centers in Shinagawa, Ushiku-shi (Ibaraki-ken), etc, instead of being provided for protection. Bewildered by such a disappointing result, they approach ISSJ to seek assistance.

ISSJ, therefore, provides supports for those detained refugee-applicants, by visiting detention centers at the pace of once per month to listen to their problems, to give encouraging advice on them and to provide them with small items for daily use such as soap, detergent, toothbrush/paste, stationeries, telephone card, etc.

The immigration's basic practice is "detaining" and "repatriate". The refugee-applicants,

detained without being informed about the time of release, are apt to suffer an array of health problems. Besides sleeplessness, headache, lack of appetite and backache, they complain about other health problems such as alternating bouts of diarrhea and constipation. In these circumstances, there are a number of refugee-applicants who get indignant at the immigration doctors who diagnose the cause of all these symptomatic states as “stress”. These refugee-applicants came to Japan seeking for help, but their physical freedom gets restrained after they were persecuted enough in their countries, which should place great stress on them and become a major element of upsetting their health. In many cases, they are endangered to the risk of not only such physical troubles but also, and more importantly, of their mental health disturbance.

Just as an example, a refugee-applicant in the detention center has developed the belief that his fellow detainees altogether put him out of the loop and jeer at him behind his back. Believing, with such paranoid fantasy, that he is a victim inside the detention, he asks for help to ISSJ with a serious look on his face.

When this kind of symptomatic states or other mental health disturbances are severe, ISSJ sets up the interviews in the presence of therapists to develop appropriate responses for the cases.

ISSJ continues to keep contact with these refugee-applicants who get out on parole. ISSJ gives advice on their living or counsel on their distress. When they feel sick, ISSJ takes them to low cost or free medical care hospitals and serves there as interpreters, if needed. Thus, ISSJ provides constant supports to them so that they can lead their lives on parole with fewer difficulties.

### **Refugee mental health workshops**

ISSJ organized three workshops entitled “Refugees Psychosocial Support and Social Work Practice” in Tokyo and Osaka in November 2012. Guest speaker was ISS Hong Kong Branch office, Program Director, Adrielle Panares, who gave lectures with the aid of simultaneous interpreters. One day/five hours program seemed not long enough to enthusiastic learners. It covered social work practices, case studies, ISS HK programs, refugees’ psychology, effective approaches, and trauma care. Participants varied from NGO staff to researchers, medical professionals, and social workers.

Session started with dramatic opening. By lecturer’s skillful narration, participants unexpectedly experience the virtual scene of civil war. They suddenly lose peaceful life, and undergo fear and threat to life. They manage to escape to other country but along the way, one by one, they lose precious things – family, self-confidence, dream and hope. In the asylum country, they are labeled as “refugees” or “asylum seekers”, and face isolation and poverty.

To support such people, you need to look at not only the present aspects but also what they had before in themselves. They feel like you, hope like you, and once enjoyed the life with loved ones. Assistance shouldn't be just giving materials, but should focus on individuals in the situation and their psychological state.

Participants were inspired by lecturer's passion, and some shed tears. Social workers should have professional skills with thoughtful attention to the individual. Multicultural social work for refugees is yet to be established as profession in Japan. However, demand is growing and ISSJ could contribute to society with its accumulated experiences and practices since the foundation. We will continuously make best efforts to develop professional skills to support people.

After the session, ISSJ received feedbacks as below;

*"Wonderful presentation! I was so excited and enjoyed learning", "I could learn practical skills as program spared lots of time on case studies", "it was the workshop that we had never before", "Very informative", "I was touched with lecturer's stories."*

ISSJ plans to provide more professional trainings in 2013.

#### **4. Training of International Social Workers**

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##### **Training Program in Cambodia**

ISSJ started project in Cambodia based on the request of Indo-Chinese refugees who came to Japan since 1980s to assist develop their country of origin. In 1996, ISSJ started to work on the task by opening day-care center "Phtea NhorNhim" (Home of Smiles) for children living in slum area on the outskirts of Phnom Penh, and started training of Cambodian social workers granted by Japan's Postal Savings for International Voluntary Aid. In 2007, Phtea NhorNhim moved its place near to National Museum in Phnom Penh, and in 2009 to "Hiroshima House" in Ounalom Temple, which was built by Hiroshima-Cambodia Citizen's Association as a monument for peace and friendship, and until now working for literacy education program with food service for children from poor families.

Over nine years of mandatory education in Cambodia, less than a half of students can graduate from elementary school due to lack of schools and teachers. Public schools provide half-day education in the morning or in the afternoon and Phtea NhorNhim is open for children who spend their time before or after school, children who cannot get public education for many reasons, and also adults who want to learn how to read and write.

In this fiscal year, ISSJ could invite two Cambodian staffs for the training in Japan for the first time since it started the program in Cambodia thanks to International Voluntary Aid. Two Cambodian staffs had briefing on education and welfare system in Japan, and during ten

days of stay in the end of July, they visited foster home, children's center (*jido-kan*), after-school day-care center, junior high school, library etc. Besides, cooperation of Hiroshima-Cambodia Citizen's Association enabled them to visit Hiroshima. After the training in Japan, they said they are impressed how much service the government provides to ensure that all the children have a chance to study and develop their ability, but most of all they feel more familiar with Japanese people and culture.

Social workers visited Phnom Penh in September, January and March, and found many positive changes in attitude of Cambodian staffs for this program. They are now improving the program by thinking on their own and respecting children's voices. Based on their request for assisting education expenses for children, ISSJ started to raise funds for educational sponsorship program, and two 17-year-old children started to go to vocational school since January. Cambodian staffs are giving interview for children to follow up their situation, and visit his/her home when necessary. Through the interviews, they found that some children abandoned their hope to go to junior high school since they don't have birth certificate, registration fee of which could cost equivalent to their family's monthly income. ISSJ would keep assisting Cambodians to work through these challenges by reaching out the community, so that more children grow up with sense of safety and hope for the future.

## **6. Participation in International Conferences**

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### **ISS-International Council Assembly**

ISS international conference (International Council Assembly) was held from May 23<sup>rd</sup> to May 25<sup>th</sup> in Banff, Canada. Prior to it, The Professional Advisory Committee was also held there. As the ISS international conference to be held for the first time in the North America area, besides the meeting for the ISS official members, open sessions were also provided for welcoming external participation, such as the social welfare persons concerned, NGO, and an administration official. The main theme was "The rising global trend of increasing immigration" and there were more than ten sessions whose theme covered various areas such as the child protection in South Africa, international adoption, the issue of surrogate mother across the border, the mediation for child abduction cases, a foster-parent system, and children of refugees, etc. Moreover, the training sessions were also prepared mainly for correspondents from developing countries. ISS branch representative, including ISSJ participated in the PAC meeting, and about 30 ISS members attended the International Council Assembly. The number of total participation was around 100.

The agendas of ISS international conference included strengths and weakness of ISS world network, how to leverage network of ISS and target setting of network expansion strategy, etc.

It was a nice reunion with many members of ISS after two years, and there were voices that worried about Japan after the big earthquake disaster from some participants, and also voices which welcomed the fact that the Noda government carried out the Cabinet decision of ratifying The Hague Convention of 1980 on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction in May, 2012.

ISS is working on social welfare various problems across the two countries between, and International Council Assembly provided a good opportunity of exchanging and sharing information between branches, and also the face-to-face interaction which increased friendships among the participants.

## **7. Communications and Public Affairs**

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### **ISSJ Charity Movie Festival**

ISSJ held a movie festival in June and October at a Hitotsubashi Hall, Jinbo-cyo 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. In 2012, this volunteer activity over these many years was highly evaluated by Daiwa Securities Welfare Foundation, and thus the volunteer activity subsidy of 300,000 yen was granted to the event committee.

The films showed in June and October were "Letters to Juliet" and "King's speech". The gross earnings from tickets, bazaar, contributions, advertising, etc. were ¥2,808,089(The 64th) and ¥2,543,534 (The 65th) respectively. The numbers of tickets sold were 2,059 and 2,055 respectively. The numbers of visitors were 1,333 and 1,326. ISSJ activities panels were also exhibited during these events.

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 2012, ISSJ Movie Festival received support from the following companies and the organizations: Foundation for the Welfare and Education of the Asian People, Iwanami Hall, Pilot International Sakura Tokyo, TAISEI Corporation, Nagase Kenko Corporation and Japan Women's University library Friendship Association, the Tokyo Keihin Rotary Club, the Tokyo Oi Rotary Club, Toyo Wharf & Warehouse Co., Ltd., the Tohyama Kaisei Co.. and Harasawa Pharmaceutical Co., Ltd.

The whole contribution from the event committee was included in the budget of ISSJ headquarters and utilized for various social welfare activities of ISSJ. ISSJ would like to express sincere gratitude for all people who supported and participated in the Movie Festival.

### **Kesenuma Harp Concert \_\_**

ISSJ received warm-hearted donation from familie international Frankfurt e.V. (the German correspondent of International Social Service (ISS) for the fields of International Adoption and Tracing) in April. It was obtained from the German charity organization for the purpose of supporting children affected by the big earthquake in 2011. With this contribution, ISSJ held the harp concert in Kesenuma city, a city in Tohoku area severely devastated by tsunami.

The concert was held at children's home Asahigaoka-Gakuen and Ms. Chizuko Ikeda who is a councillor of ISSJ and is also a music therapist, performed a harp concert.

There was about 40 persons' participation of the children of a nursing institution, the personnel of institutions, the personnel of a child guidance center, neighbors, etc.

The audience was touched by Ms. Ikeda's talk and her beautiful harp performance and sang together with harp performance and had a good time.

Harp mini concert was also held at a temporary building of Fujinosono children's home in Iwate, since the original building was damaged by the big earthquake and it was being renovated for the new one then. The children who live there were gathered and the improvisatorial concert was held with the saul harp.

ISSJ social workers were also able to visit the children's home and child guidance center in that area, and hear about the subject of the present children's condition after an earthquake disaster and the child welfare of the area. ISSJ social workers also introduced ISSJ's activities such as support for international adoption, support for stateless children and support for asylum-seekers, refugees, etc.

ISSJ would like to express deep appreciation to familie international Frankfurt e.V. for supporting ISSJ activities.

### **Feature in NHK programs**

As part of NHK Osaka's campaign, "Protect our children!", ISSJ's international adoption program was featured in their TV program. The NHK crew interviewed Omori General

Director and filmed the actual scenes where child study was done. In June, the first program was on air. They talked about Japanese adoption systems from adoptive parents' point of view and the fear for inter-country adoption practice not based on the Hague Convention. They also filmed the daily life in a baby home and a children's home. In August, NHK made a slight change to the program and focused more on adoptees. A 16-year-old boy and a 32-year-old man who were adopted through ISSJ were interviewed and they shared their thoughts in the program. Also in this program, NHK decided to feature a 4-year-old boy "Shun" who was living in baby home and how the involved parties, including ISSJ, were looking for adoptive parents for him. The above mentioned two programs were aired only in Kinki area of Japan but there were a lot of feedbacks from viewers. The NHK Osaka decided to make another program on little bit grown "Shun" which was on TV in December and broadcasted all over in Japan. These three TV programs were broadcasted on NHK's international channel for people who lived in abroad. ISSJ received many emails and phone calls from people in Japan and outside of Japan asking about "Shun" thanks to these programs. ISSJ also received more adoption applications and some donations from viewers.

#### **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 2012	Number of Cases
Cases newly received during this fiscal year	744
Cases newly opened during this fiscal year	101
Cases re-opened during this fiscal year	13
Cases continued from previous fiscal year	523
Grand total of cases during this fiscal year	1381

**Number of Casework Service According to Main Categories of Cases**

Subject	Number of Counseling	Number of Cases
Inter-country adoption/Foster care	4107	691
Counseling for international marriage/divorce	43	23
Nationality problems	328	40
Acknowledgement of children	59	17
Child abuse/Child care problems	4	4
Repatriation cases	40	14
Procedure for staying in Japan	68	42
Reunion with family	234	50
Welfare administration	7	4
Mental problems	55	8
Problems regarding medical treatment	19	11
Job hunting	1	15
Education of Japanese language	0	0
Locating missing persons	3	2
Problems of education	0	2
Inheritance	5	4
Translation/preparation of documents	10	2
Providing of information	12	7
Criminal cases	1	1
Assistance for adjustment of living	1	3
Formation of the staff	0	0
Refugee Problems	957	415
Abduction	70	10
Others	24	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>6048</b>	<b>1381</b>

## Countries Involved in the Cases

The following 68 countries and area are involved in the cases during this fiscal year:

Afghanistan	Angola	Australia	Bangladesh	Brazil
Cambodia	Cameroon	Canada	Chechen	China
Colombia	Congo	Cuba	Denmark	Egypt
Ethiopia	France	Germany	Ghana	Guinea
Hong Kong	India	Indonesia	Iran	Italy
Kenya	Korea	Kosovo	Kurd	Laos
Liberia	Malawi	Malaysia	Mali	Mauritius
Mexico	Moldova	Mongolia	Morocco	Myanmar
Nepal	Netherlands	New Zealand	Niger	Nigeria
Pakistan	Paraguay	Peru	Philippines	Romania
Senegal	Somalia	South Africa	Spain	Sri Lanka
Sudan	Sweden	Switzerland	Syria	Tanzania
Thailand	Tibet	Turkey	Uganda	UK
Ukraine	USA	Vietnam		

## Organizations that Referred Clients to ISSJ

During this fiscal year there were 744 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		176
Japanese Government Offices	Related Ministries, Prefectures, Municipals	25
	Japanese Embassies in foreign countries	9
	Family Court	6
	Child Guidance Center, Welfare Office, Health Center	22
	Regional Immigration Bureau, Police	5
U.S. Military concerned (Family Service Office, Legal Office on base, etc.)		0
International organizations such as U.N, etc.		10
Medical institutions		0
Schools, Churches, NGO		15
Publications, Mass media, ISS publicity		246
Lawyers		9
Friends/acquaintances/families/the person himself(or herself)		109
ISS branches and correspondents		6
Others		104
<b>Total</b>		<b>744</b>

