

COMPLETION REPORT

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Reimagining and Rethinking Solidarity, Economic Partnership, and Cooperation in Asia: The Case of Japanese Women Activism as Transnational Women's Movement

My research project initially revolved around Japanese Women's Activism as part of the Transnational Women's Movement. While considerable excitement exists about the prospect of sustained development in Asia, poverty remains a crucial benchmark to evaluate whether a particular nation has achieved inclusive economic growth. As a response, international aid and grants are now geared towards poverty reduction, which can translate into empowerment for the recipients, ensuring project sustainability. In particular, the movement of transnational groups is notable. These transnational groups, often citizen-initiated non-governmental organizations, reached out to their Asian neighbors with offers of help through financial aid, capacity-building projects, awareness campaigns, and the conduct of study/research tours, among others. In Southeast Asia, Japanese women are at the forefront of this movement. The paper investigates the case of the Association of Women Empowerment Project (AWEP), which promotes women's empowerment through fair trade that provides jobs for women, information sharing, and counseling for foreign residents in Japan. Japanese women NGOs' reimagining of female solidarity contributes to deepening the understanding of being women and helping other women across borders, nationalities, ideologies, and cultures while remaining sensitive to the postcolonial realities of Southeast Asians.

However, the onset of the pandemic, which lasted for three years, had made me re-configure my research. As I have noted in my response to the questionnaire on the impact of the pandemic, the inability to travel and visit my respondents in Japan personally impacted my research in a big way. Nevertheless, I was able to re-orient the research toward the AWEP's remarkable response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought significant challenges to the women dependent on the healthcare and tourism industries for the livelihood of their families. These challenges opened opportunities for organizations to alter their traditional forms of assistance into modalities that address the effects of the pandemic. I explore the Asian Women Empowerment Project (AWEP), a Japan-based organization dedicated to helping poor women in Asian countries attain economic power. During the pandemic, AWEP attuned its programs to respond to its challenges. Using ecofeminist theologian Sallie McFague's ecological model, I demonstrate that AWEP reveals Japanese women's acute understanding of a need for an ecological ethics of solidarity that includes ecological interests, a consciousness of solidarity, and cooperation through global sisterhood, which posits that women the world over share everyday experiences regardless of race, nationality, ethnicity, class, or economic status and, therefore, should help one another.

Publication of the Results of Research Project:

Verbal Presentation (Date, Venue, Name of Conference, Title of Presentation, Presenter, etc.)

Ecclesia of Women in Asia 10th Conference (online) February 22-24, 2022.

In this conference, Jeane Peracullo (Philippines) discussed how the Asian Women Empowerment Project in Japan assists women attain economic power. Peracullo, offered a theological reflection based on an ecological ethic of solidarity through global sisterhood. Inspired by the community model of Sallie McFague, Peracullo argued that women can expand the liminal space and operate beyond the institutional church.

<https://ecclesiaofwomenblog.wordpress.com/2022/04/05/asian-women-scholars-discussed-how-to-build-life-giving-communities-during-and-after-the-pandemic/>

Thesis (Name of Journal and its Date, Title and Author of Thesis, etc.)

Peracullo, J. (2023). Japanese women's activism sustains a life-giving community in the pandemic. *Acta Theologica*, Suppl 35, Towards life-giving communities in a post-pandemic world: Asian feminist theological perspectives. <https://doi.org/10.38140/at.v35i1.6201>

Book (Publisher and Date of the Book, Title and Author of the Book, etc.)