

“Food Crisis for the Homeless and others during COVID-19”

Date: **Wednesday, January 27th**

Time: **7pm-8pm (Tokyo time)**

Presentation will be followed by Q and A

On Zoom. Open to all; language English

Please register [HERE](#)



<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=p-YOaaVN3E-jFrtZnYKlopSDtnsMuJVAtzRnSitkskJUQkYyNIJSOVBIUdUMkwxVzIBNU5HMFNFR4u>

This session will begin with an introduction to the article by Slater and Ikebe, "[Social Distancing from the Problem of Japanese Homeless Under Covid-19](#)". Without shelter, having to do without personal protective equipment, often without health insurance and unable to limit contact with strangers, homeless people face a high risk of infection. With the withdrawal of governmental and NPO support, including food support, their vulnerability increased. From here, we will expand our discussion to focus on the larger issues of food shortage, where Charles McJilton will share his experience as Director of Second Harvest, the largest food bank in Japan. As one of the support groups that remained active and effective in their activities, McJilton has a unique perspective on the Tokyo scene. Together we will talk about the levels and types of support during and since the Covid-19 first wave: what went well, what did not work, and are we in any way more prepared for the next wave?

Charles E. McJilton first came to Asia in 1984 with the US military and returned to Japan in 1991 to conduct research at Sophia University. At that time he lived in a religious community in one of the poorest sections of Tokyo (Sanya) where day-laborers and homeless lived. It was this experience that set him on his current trajectory. In 1995 he founded “Let’s Build,” a self-help center dedicated to providing tools for those living on the streets to either help themselves or die with dignity. While he felt he understood many of the issues of those in his community, he felt something lacking. So from January 1997 to April 1998 he lived in a cardboard house among the homeless along the Sumida River in Tokyo. This experience radically changed his worldview and deeply influences his approach to providing aid and developing organizations.

He has founded four organizations in Asia that deal with food security. In 2002 he incorporated the first food bank in Japan (Second Harvest Japan). In 2010 he created a 501(c)3, Second Harvest Asia, to promote food banking in Asia. In 2012 he incorporated the first food bank in the Philippines (Salu-Salu: Food Bank Philippines). And in 2013 he established a public-interest foundation registered at the Japanese Cabinet Office Alliance of Japan Foodbanks (formerly Second Harvest Japan Alliance) to develop a national network of food banks in Japan. He taught NGO Management at Sophia University, 2009 – to present. He is married with four children.

Article by Slater and Ikebe, "[Social Distancing from the Problem of Japanese Homeless Under Covid-19](#)" is from our collection in the [Asia Pacific Journal: Japan Focus](#)

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Notes on the full series: This discussion is the first in a series we will hold over the autumn on the causes, effects and current status of vulnerable populations in Japan during the Covid-19 pandemic. Each discussion will be moderated by David Slater and will give listeners a chance to meet the authors and others associated with the articles (advocates, activists, supporters, and participants). The authors will provide insight into the articles, as well as background to the conditions of data collection in the age of Corona, an update on the situation and a look forward—asking if we are any better prepared for next time.

An introduction to the whole collection here: [Vulnerable Populations in Japan under Covid-19: A lull in the storm](#) by David H. Slater

Abstract for the full collection of papers: This is a collection of original articles on diverse vulnerable populations in Japan in the wake of the new coronavirus pandemic. The effects of COVID-19 are felt differently, with some among us at much greater risk of infection due to preexisting health and welfare conditions. For others, perhaps more than the risk of infection, it is the precautions taken to mitigate the risk for the whole population, such as lockdowns and business closures, that have pulled away the already fragile safety net of state and civil society organization (CSO) support, leading to increased marginalization and social exclusion. The goal of this set of papers is to document the conditions of those that have been most directly affected by the virus and to provide background on the conditions that made them vulnerable in the first place, notably chronic conditions that are brought into more obvious relief in light of emergency measures. Each of the authors had a pre-established relationship with those affected populations and employed various ethnographic approaches, some face to face, others digitally via Zoom interviews and SNS exchanges. In this moment of what appears to be relative calm, we hope that our collection, quickly compiled in an attempt to capture the ever-changing situation, will give some insight into how those most vulnerable are faring in this time of crisis and provide information that will allow us to prepare better before the next wave comes our way.

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