

# “Limitations of Social Protections of Migrant Families in Japan Exposed by COVID-19: The Case of Nepalese Women”

Date: Thursday, December 3rd  
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-jFrtZnYKlopSDtnsMuJVAzRnSitkskJUMERZNFRCRkNHUjJaNUo1WTFKQzU5QlhRQy4u>

The right to protection from violence should be conferred upon all people regardless of their nationality. However, migrant women in Japan face exceptional risks, including that of domestic violence. This paper focuses on the vulnerability of Nepalese women, most often in Japan as dependents of their husbands, who are engaged as cooks in the ubiquitous Indo-Nepali restaurants. Shut out of the male-dominated support networks within the Nepalese community, they are forced to rely on Japanese state support in a time of crisis. Yet, despite the fact that most of these women are working and paying taxes in Japan, many are unable to effectively access the state support system, leaving them particularly at risk in times of calamity, as we are seeing now with COVID-19. This paper outlines their vulnerability and calls upon the state to recognize that these migrants are not free riders, but residents entitled to equal rights and protection under the law. At a time when we often hear about the national imperative to "Build Back Better" in the post-COVID-19 period, I hope that these vulnerable populations are included in such building.

**Masako Tanaka** is a professor of Gender Studies and South Asian Studies at Sophia University. As a certified social worker, she serves on the Information Dissemination Network for Nepalese Migrants in Japan. As an activist, she has been involved in various civil society movements both in Japan and in Nepal. She researches migrants and trafficking survivors and the role of civil society organizations in migrants' 'social integration processes. One of her recent related articles is "Roles of migrant organizations as transnational civil societies in their residential communities: A case study of Nepalese organizations in Japan," in *Japan Review of Cultural Anthropology*.

Masako will be discussing her recently published paper: "[Limitations of Social Protections of Migrant Families in Japan Exposed by COVID-19: The Case of Nepalese Women](#)" from our collection in the [Asia Pacific Journal: Japan Focus](#)

.....  
**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.