

## 2021 World Conference against A & H Bombs -- Hiroshima Day Rally

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### Let Us Expand the Circle of Peace Builders from the Grassroots to Realize a Japan that Joins TPNW

New Japan Women's Association Kanagawa Chapter has encouraged our members to participate in the World Conference, saying, "Let's take advantage of online conferencing and invite those who have never been to the World Conference!" Convinced that it would be an opportunity to be connected from home to friends around the world, and that it would give us hope for the future, 512 Chapter members have joined this World Conference.

The New Japan Women's Association has received many new members in different places. They came to know the association through social media and are involved in our real activities. At the Kanagawa Chapter, we too have such new members. Ms. K joined our Chapter because she wanted to learn about gender issues. Attending the association's regular meetings, she became more and more eager to work for the elimination of nuclear weapons, and started to participate in the monthly signature drive on the 6th and 9th of each month. Today, she's attending the World Conference with her fellow branch members!

Another new member who joined our Chapter via social media, Ms. A, said that on social media she could only get to know people who have either similar feelings or opposite opinions, and she wanted to talk to someone in between. She attended the monthly signature drive last July. She told the senior members that few people received the flyers they were distributing. They responded, saying with a cheerful laugh, "Yes, as always!". Ms. A was amazed by the resilience and strength of those who have long carried on the activities on the ground.

Kanagawa Chapter has set the goal of each member collecting 10 signatures in support of the appeal for the Japanese government to sign and ratify the TPNW. Members have tried their best as they mobilize fellow members in the Bikini Day commemoration events, Peace March and the World Conference. In the peace march this year, we organized actions in each community instead of marching in a long line. This made it easier for those who had never walked in the march to join and in fact they found it fun. In May alone, the number of signatures we collected during the peace march reached 3,120.

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the entry into force of the TPNW gave us courage and hope. Each branch of Kanagawa Chapter immediately made their own tapestries and took to the streets to appeal to the public. When the signature campaign calling on the Japanese government to sign and ratify the TPNW was launched, our local members were so happy and they said this was exactly what they wanted to do. We started a "Thank You" action to reach out to the people who had signed the Hibakusha Appeal petition to tell them that, thanks to their cooperation, the TPNW has been established and has now come into force. We sent out or brought copies of the new signature form with a "Thank You" letter to those people. This initiative has been successful in increasing local people's support for our call on the government to join the TPNW.

As January 22, the date TPNW came into effect, was approaching, we discussed how best we could express our joy to the public under the COVID-19 state of emergency and inform them that the TPNW, the achievement of our own efforts, had now become law. We decided to distribute flyers with signature forms printed on them to all houses in our prefecture. On the morning of January 22, 39 branches of Kanagawa Chapter distributed 376,000 flyers by inserting them into major newspapers. A lot of feedback came in at once, saying, "You're doing a great job," or "Thank you for making the TPNW known." We received new members among these people, too. We were greatly inspired by nearly 200 signatures signed on the forms we printed coming back to us. We felt proud of ourselves for having done what we could, even under the state of emergency, and this sense of accomplishment has been the impetus for us to move forward.

At the moment, the number of signatures our members have collected is 180,000. We still have a lot to reach our goal, but with renewed resolve given by this World Conference, we will gear up our effort.

**Not Olympics but Lives! Money for COVID-19 measures, Not for Military Spending or Nuclear Weapons!**

Let us do our utmost to push Japan's ratification of the TPNW onto the election agenda as an essential issue for the joint struggle of citizens and opposition parties. Let us work together to establish a government that joins the TPNW! Let us achieve a nuclear-weapons-free, peaceful and just world! New Japan Women's Kanagawa Chapter, with all our local members, will make every effort from the grassroots to attain our signature goal. Together, let us keep on moving!