



Tokyo
Investigative
Newsroom

Tansa

GLOBALGIVING ACCELERATOR PROJECT

**HOLD POWER TO ACCOUNT
WITH CROSS-BORDER
INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM**



JOURNALISM IN JAPAN

Japan currently sits 67th in Reporters Without Borders' World Press Freedom Index, which explains the low ranking as follows.

“Journalists find it hard to fully play their role as democracy’s watchdog because of the influence of tradition and business interests. ... The system of ‘kisha clubs’ (reporters’ clubs) continues to discriminate against freelancers and foreign reporters. On social networks, nationalist groups harass journalists who are critical of the government or cover ‘anti-patriotic’ subjects such as the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster or the U.S. military presence in Okinawa.”

As traditional, for-profit models lose their economic viability, Japan’s mainstream media have increasingly shied away from investigative journalism. It’s seen as too time-consuming, too expensive, and too risky. Instead, self-censorship and prioritizing access over holding power to account often define Japan's press.

Not all these problems are unique to Japan. And in many countries — including South Korea, Taiwan, and the U.S., to name a few — nonprofit media dedicated to investigative journalism have risen to fill this gap in the media landscape. Unfortunately, Japan has not seen the same success, due to a weak donation culture and a low understanding of the importance of investigative journalism.

Still, inspired by our colleagues around the world, we decided to pioneer nonprofit investigative journalism in Japan with Tansa.

ABOUT TANSA

Tansa is an independent, nonprofit, investigative newsroom based in Tokyo.

We believe investigative journalism is essential for the Japanese public, and for those impacted by Japan's presence in the world. Our investigations reveal — and aim thereby to end — wrongdoing by the powerful, such as government bodies and corporations.

In order to maintain our editorial independence, Tansa does not run ads. And we don't have a paywall, so our stories are available to everyone. Our funding comes mainly from reader donations and grants from foundations. If you believe in Tansa's mission, please consider supporting our work.

Awards

2017: Supporter of the Free Press Award from the Foreign Correspondents Club of Japan

2018: Poverty Journalism Grand Prize from the Anti-Poverty Network

2020: Journalism X Award from the Journalism Citizen Support Fund



COLLABORATION IS THE FUTURE OF JOURNALISM

In 2018, Tansa became Japan's first official member of the Global Investigative Journalism Network (GIJN), which as of August 2021 is comprised of 211 independent, nonprofit media organizations in 82 countries.

As GIJN notes, "We live in a globalized era in which our commerce — and our crimes — are multinational." If we aim to truly hold power to account, it's no longer enough for journalists to simply cover events in their own country, since often that means only uncovering a fraction of what's really going on.

Cross-border collaboration between journalists is the solution. Making use of each partner's local network and sharing findings maximizes the efficiency of the investigation. And joint publication, tailored to each partner's audience, maximizes the reach and potential impact of the stories. You've probably heard of a few famous cross-border collaborations in journalism, such as the Panama Papers or the Pegasus Project.

We're no longer competing for scoops. We're working together for impact.

TANSA'S CROSS-BORDER COLLABORATIONS

- **Coal Crusades**

A collaboration with Indonesian media Tempo and South Korean media KCIJ Newstapa. We investigated Indonesia's Cirebon coal-fired power plant, which is funded by Japan and South Korea, and revealed how pollution from the plant has negatively impacted the local community and environment.

- **Blowing Unsmoke**

A collaboration with the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project and nine other newsrooms around the world. We investigated tobacco giant Philip Morris' advertising tactics for its heated tobacco product IQOS. The company touts IQOS as a better option than cigarettes, despite experts raising concerns about the product's health risks.

- **Tokyo Stories**

A collaboration with the Guardian. We investigated the phenomenon of solitary deaths in public housing complexes, as older generations are left behind despite Japan's economic prosperity.



- **CumEx Files**

An ongoing investigation, led by German media Correctiv, with reporting partners including the BBC, Panorama, and Le Monde. In 2018, the CumEx Files exposed the biggest tax robbery in European history — €55bn — and now new documents have leaked. If Tansa is involved in the investigation, Japanese institutions must have been involved in the robbery...

- **Asian Stories**

A collaboration with journalists from South Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Australia to investigate coal-fired power plants in our respective countries, as well as why Asia can't seem to kick its reliance on coal. Tansa's stories focus on coal power and climate litigation.

- **Environmental Reporting Collective**

A collaboration with environmental media Mongabay, as a project of the Environmental Reporting Collective. We investigated human rights abuses in one of Japan's seafood supply chains.

OTHER REPORTING – NOT COLLABORATIVE, BUT STILL INTERNATIONAL!

- **Sweet Bananas, Bitter Work**

This series is based on detailed interviews with workers at banana plantations and packing plants in the Philippines who faced harassment and attacks for demanding fair wages and better working conditions. Their underpaid labor gives Japan its cheapest fruit.

- **Myanmar Left for Dead**

This series focuses on Japan's business interests in Myanmar, which appear to take precedence over human rights concerns even after the February 2021 military coup. Japan finances a number of projects in Myanmar linked to the military.