



World Assembly for Women: WAW!2022 Concept Note

(Reference) Current Situation and Challenges Concerning Women's Participation in Decision-Making Processes

Goal 5 (gender equality) of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aims to "ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making ^(Note1)". In addition, the first G20 Ministerial Conference on Women's Empowerment in 2021 highlighted the importance of women's and girls' participation in academic research, including in fields such as STEM, and of women occupying leadership positions in the policy-making processes, given that the environment and climate change measures have different impacts on women from on men ^(Note2).

In Japan, women continue to be in the overwhelming minority in many decision-making situations: in the House of Councillors election in July 2022, the number of women elected reached a record high of 35, while the percentage of women in the House of Councillors is 25.8% and the percentage of women in the House of Representatives is 9.9%, ranking 166th out of 190 countries (as of September 2022 for the House of Representatives and the House of Councillors, and as of January 2021 for other countries) ^(Note3). The percentage of women in local assemblies tends to be higher in urban areas and lower in the countryside, and there are 24 city assemblies and 251 town/village assemblies that lack female members (as of December 2021) ^(Note4). Furthermore, the percentage of women in managerial positions, which is generally over 30% in major developed countries, is 13.2%.

There are multiple factors behind the lack of women's participation in leadership positions. Common challenges include difficulty in maintaining an appropriate work-life balance, lack of opportunities for human resource development, difficulty in continuing to work due to women's unique health issues,

uncertainty about career paths, and lack of role models. In addition, gender stereotypes and unconscious bias are considered to be another common barrier in all countries. As for work-life balance the problem of long working hours in Japan has also been pointed out.

We need to see gender issues with a sense of urgency, as it could lead to further social problems and economic stagnation. For example, the World Bank estimates that the losses caused by gender inequality amount to approximately \$160 trillion, twice the world's GDP. In Japan, labor losses due to women's health issues such as menstrual pains, premenstrual syndrome, and menopause amount to 491.1 billion yen per year, while expanding women's economic participation to the same level as men has increased GDP by 26% (\$28 trillion) over 10 years and businesses that promoted gender equality and diversity in management levels grew 10-15% faster than those that did not ^(Note5). Furthermore, in Japan, the percentage of women in their teens and twenties who migrate from rural areas to urban areas continues to be higher than that of men in the same age group ^(Note6), which is seen as a problem contributing to the declining birthrate, aging population, and depopulation of rural areas. In the future, the trend may become more and more accelerated as highly qualified individuals leave countries where gender equality is not progressing. In fact, more and more women are becoming active in international organizations and overseas.

ESG investment, which focuses on and selects companies that are environmentally, socially (including in relation to women's activities), and governance-conscious, has been rapidly expanding and spreading over the past few years. Companies that are reluctant to address ESG issues may be regarded as disqualified for investment, unable to receive the necessary funding, and lose an opportunity for growth.

Against this backdrop, globally investors and shareholders in the private sector are increasingly demanding the disclosure of information on the extent to which companies promote gender equality. Some countries adopted quota systems to increase the percentage of women in political and economic decision-making positions.

Many studies have shown that consideration from a gender and diverse

perspective, in government and engage in decision-making processes can lead to solutions to social problems and new innovations. It is also known that organizations with diversity are better able to manage crises than homogenous organizations ^(Note7).

(Note1) [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "SDG Indicators 5: Gender Equality"](#)

5.5 Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life

(Note2) [内閣府男女共同参画局, "G20 Conference on Women's Empowerment, Santa Margherita Ligure, August 26, 2021, Chair's Statement"](#)

(Note3) [衆議院ホームページ及び IPU ホームページ \(Women in politics:2021\)](#) (Japanese)

(Note4) [総務省「地方公共団体の議会の議員及び長の所属党派別人員調べ」](#) (Japanese)

(Note5) [World Bank Group, "Unrealized Potential : The High Cost of Gender Inequality in Earnings"](#)

[JICA, "グローバルアジェンダ リーフレット"](#) (Japanese)

[McKinsey&Company, "How advancing women's equality can add \\$12 trillion to global growth"](#)

[McKinsey&Company, "Diversity wins: How inclusion matters"](#)

(Note6) [内閣府男女共同参画局, "令和4年版男女共同参画白書"](#) p.140 (Japanese)

(Note7) [内閣府男女共同参画局, "女性活躍で企業は強くなる"](#) (Japanese)