

Chapter 6

EVALUATION AND INITIATIVES BY EACH STAKEHOLDER



6. Evaluation and initiatives by each stakeholder

(1) Introduction

In this chapter, we aim to elucidate the process that led to raising the awareness of "SDGs" to over 90% and the actual state of initiatives by having stakeholders review their actions and progress toward achieving the SDGs. By including qualitative data that cannot be fully expressed through indicators, and conducting reviews from a critical perspective outside the government, we intend to demonstrate progress comprehensively across the entire VNR.

The review method for this chapter is as follows: The primary members of the SDGs Promotion Roundtable conducted reviews on issues related to the stakeholders they belong to or represent. Subsequently, editing was done to integrate texts appropriately and avoid duplication. The main authors for each section are as follows, with overall supervision by member Norichika Kanie, and final editing was conducted in coordination with the SDGs Promotion Headquarters Secretariat.

While efforts were made to ensure that there was no bias in content or volume based on goals or stakeholders, it is a fact that there was some bias in the information provided by each stakeholder. Standardizing data and information remains a challenge for the future.

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(2) Evaluation chart map by 17 goals by stakeholders: Norichika Kanie (member), Yusuke Inoue (project assistant professor at Keio University)

Evaluation by goal: Masaki Inaba (member), Atsuko Miwa (member), Ren Onishi (member)

(3) Initiatives by stakeholders—A. Media Trend: Norichika Kanie (member), Keiko Iizuka (member)

Support: Masahiro Kawatei

B-1. Gender: Atsuko Miwa (member), Asako Kimura (member), Yoshiko Norimatsu (member)

B-2. Youth: 2.1 Soichiro Chiba (member)

2.2 Kumiko Hongyo (member)

C-1. Trend in businesses 3.1 Business: Keiji Nishizawa (member)

3.2 Small and medium enterprises: Asako Kimura (member)

3.3 Finance: Masayuki Takanashi (member), Yoshinori Endo (member)

3.4 Labor Union: Yoshiko Norimatsu (member)

C-2. Trend in civil societies 4.1 Masaki Inaba (member), Atsuko Miwa (member), Ren Onishi (member)

4.2 Consumers: Yasuko Kono (member)

4.3 Labor union: Yoshiko Norimatsu (member)

4.4 Cooperative union: Masahiro Higa (member)

C-3. Trend in research and education institutions

5.1 Research institutions: Norichika Kanie (member), Fumiko Kasuga (member)

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C-4. Trend in local governments 6. Yatsuka Kataoka, Research Fellow of Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES)

C-5. Congress Secretariat

(2) Evaluation by stakeholders by 17 goals

Evaluation by 17 goals

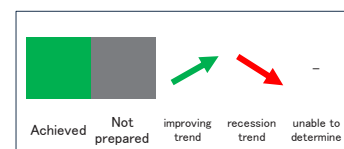
The progress of the SDGs thus far has been evaluated based on global indicators. The evaluation method and overall trends are as follows:

For each SDG target, global indicators were assessed using the longest available period of data. If the most recent value of an indicator exceeds the average value for the period, it is considered an "improving trend"; if it is below, it is deemed a "deteriorating trend." When comparing the most recent and average values, it is important to determine whether the indicator is a "positive indicator" (a higher value is more desirable) or a "negative indicator" (a higher value is less desirable). For example, for positive indicators, if the most recent value is above the average, it is considered an "improving trend," and if below, a "deteriorating trend." Conversely, for negative indicators, if the most recent value is above the average, it is considered a "deteriorating trend," and if below, an "improving trend." Additionally, "achieved" indicates that the target level has already been reached, "not established"

means data is unavailable, and a "-" signifies that the trend of the relevant indicator cannot be determined.

As an overall trend, for example, significant progress has been observed in many targets under Goals 3, 6, and 9. However, for targets within these goals that are in decline, as well as for other targets showing a declining trend, there is a need to strengthen measures, especially from the perspective of the "leave no one behind" principle. In some areas, such as gender equality (Goal 5), there are significant fluctuations, and challenges where trends cannot be confirmed are evident. It will be necessary in the future to conduct transparent progress monitoring through the development and disclosure of data in more detailed categories and the selection of relevant indicators.

1 NO POVERTY	1.1.1	1.2.1	1.2.2	1.3.1	1.4.1	1.4.2	1.5.1	1.5.2	1.5.3	1.5.4	1.a.1	1.a.2	1.b.1			
				-							-	-				
2 ZERO HUNGER	2.1.1	2.1.2	2.2.1	2.2.2	2.2.3	2.3.1	2.3.2	2.4.1	2.5.1	2.5.2	2.a.1	2.a.2	2.b.1	2.c.1		
			-	-	-			-					-	-		
3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	3.1.1	3.1.2	3.2.1	3.2.2	3.3.1	3.3.2	3.3.3	3.3.4	3.3.5	3.4.1	3.4.2	3.5.1	3.5.2	3.6.1	3.7.1	3.7.2
							ineligible	-	-						-	-
	3.8.1	3.8.2	3.9.1	3.9.2	3.9.3	3.a.1	3.b.1	3.b.2	3.b.3	3.c.1	3.d.1	3.d.2				
	-						-			-						
4 QUALITY EDUCATION	4.1.1	4.1.2	4.2.1	4.2.2	4.3.1	4.4.1	4.5.1	4.6.1	4.7.1	4.a.1	4.b.1	4.c.1				
	-	-			-	-	-		-	-	ineligible					
5 GENDER EQUALITY	5.1.1	5.2.1	5.2.2	5.3.1	5.3.2	5.4.1	5.5.1	5.5.2	5.6.1	5.6.2	5.a.1	5.a.2	5.b.1	5.c.1		
	-	-	-	-		-				-				-		
6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION	6.1.1	6.2.1	6.3.1	6.3.2	6.4.1	6.4.2	6.5.1	6.5.2	6.6.1	6.a.1	6.b.1					
				-				ineligible								
7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY	7.1.1	7.1.2	7.2.1	7.3.1	7.a.1	7.b.1										
		-														
8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH	8.1.1	8.2.1	8.3.1	8.4.1	8.4.2	8.5.1	8.5.2	8.6.1	8.7.1	8.8.1	8.8.2	8.9.1	8.10.1	8.10.2	8.a.1	8.b.1
			-	-	-							-	-			
9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE	9.1.1	9.1.2	9.2.1	9.2.2	9.3.1	9.3.2	9.4.1	9.5.1	9.5.2	9.a.1	9.b.1	9.c.1				
		-	-	-	-											
10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES	10.1.1	10.2.1	10.3.1	10.4.1	10.4.2	10.5.1	10.6.1	10.7.1	10.7.2	10.7.3	10.7.4	10.a.1	10.b.1	10.c.1		
	-	-			-	-	ineligible	-	-	-	ineligible					
11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES	11.1.1	11.2.1	11.3.1	11.3.2	11.4.1	11.5.1	11.5.2	11.5.3	11.6.1	11.6.2	11.7.1	11.7.2	11.a.1	11.b.1	11.b.2	
		-		-									-			
12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION	12.1.1	12.2.1	12.2.2	12.3.1	12.4.1	12.4.2	12.5.1	12.6.1	12.7.1	12.8.1	12.a.1	12.b.1	12.c.1			
	-	-	-			-		-	-	-						
13 CLIMATE ACTION	13.1.1	13.1.2	13.1.3	13.2.1	13.2.2	13.3.1	13.a.1	13.b.1								
							ineligible									
14 LIFE BELOW WATER	14.1.1	14.2.1	14.3.1	14.4.1	14.5.1	14.6.1	14.7.1	14.a.1	14.b.1	14.c.1						
					-	-										
15 LIFE ON LAND	15.1.1	15.1.2	15.2.1	15.3.1	15.4.1	15.4.2	15.5.1	15.6.1	15.7.1	15.8.1	15.9.1	15.a.1	15.b.1	15.c.1		
	-	-	-		-	-	-				-					
16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS	16.1.1	16.1.2	16.1.3	16.1.4	16.2.1	16.2.2	16.2.3	16.3.1	16.3.2	16.3.3	16.4.1	16.4.2	16.5.1	16.5.2	16.6.1	16.6.2
			-	-				-							-	-
	16.7.1	16.7.2	16.8.1	16.9.1	16.10.1	16.10.2	16.a.1	16.b.1								
	-	ineligible			-	-										
17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS	17.1.1	17.1.2	17.2.1	17.3.1	17.3.2	17.4.1	17.5.1	17.6.1	17.7.1	17.8.1	17.9.1	17.10.1	17.11.1	17.12.1	17.13.1	17.14.1
	-			-	ineligible	ineligible		-				ineligible	ineligible	ineligible	-	
	17.15.1	17.16.1	17.17.1	17.18.1	17.18.2	17.18.3	17.19.1	17.19.2								
			-				ineligible									



Below, the progress review results conducted by stakeholders, led primarily by members of the SDGs Promotion Roundtable, are presented for each goal.

Goal 1 ⁶¹



- Regarding the state of poverty within Japan, data related to global indicators 1.2.1 and 1.2.2 is not available, making progress evaluation impossible. There is consistent concern expressed by civil society about the absence of a government-specific definition of poverty and the lack of established indicators based on such a definition. Additionally, the situation persists where attribute-specific data required by global indicator 1.3.1 is not adequately developed.
- In addition to long-standing issues of poverty and inequality, high prices due to inflation directly hit households, putting pressure on the lives of low- and middle-income groups. The compounded effects of financial hardship and social isolation and loneliness are making life increasingly difficult for many, contributing to growing social fragmentation.
- The need to prioritize poverty reduction measures in Japan's development cooperation policy is pointed out by civil society.

Goal 2



- Civil society is calling for the publication of data related to global indicator 2.5.2 (the proportion of native species classified as at risk of extinction) and for the clarification of goals and indicators to achieve productive and sustainable agriculture, including the expansion of the agricultural budget.
- The situation in Africa remains particularly severe, with 20% of the population reported to be undernourished, and women being the most affected. In Japan's development cooperation policy, civil society has highlighted the need to prioritize development cooperation that contributes to the prevention of hunger and the achievement of Target 2.4 (ensuring sustainable food production systems).
- Progress in reducing Food Loss and Waste remains slow, and urgent action is required.
- There is significant delay as well in transitioning from industrial agriculture to agroecology in harmony with ecosystems, in providing policy support for small-scale family farming, in securing sustainable livelihoods and employment for farmers and producers, and in ensuring food security based on the right to food.

⁶¹As for each Goal, SDGs Civil Society Network (SDGs Japan), *SDGs Spotlight Report 2025* (2025) is used as a reference.

- Achieving Goal 2 is critically dependent on the realization of peace. War and armed conflict are severely impacting food supply, with regions experiencing intense warfare, such as the Palestinian Gaza Strip and Sudan, facing what is described as catastrophic levels of hunger. Hunger is the most evident humanitarian crisis, and there is a need for strengthened emergency humanitarian aid, including urgent food assistance.

Goal 3



- Regarding Target 3.4 (reducing non-communicable diseases and promoting mental health and well-being), mental health issues within communities in vulnerable situations, including LGBTQ⁶² individuals, are severe. Several studies indicate that LGBTQ youth experience suicidal ideation, suicide attempts, and self-harming behaviors at higher rates. Factors contributing to these issues include a lack of access to appropriate information about LGBTQ issues, feelings of isolation, and societal stigma. Similarly, there is a higher prevalence of mood disorders and anxiety disorders among LGBTQ youth, with rates three to four times higher than in non-LGBTQ individuals.
- Due to the development of social security systems, Japan is relatively closer to achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) compared to many countries. However, population and social groups that are particularly vulnerable and prone to be subject to discrimination and prejudice have problems with access to health care. Regarding mental illness, in addition to remaining issues of long-term hospitalization from before, and coupled with deep-rooted discrimination and prejudice, there are difficulties in accessing the required high-quality medical care. Drug addiction also has similar problems. Meanwhile, undocumented migrants and foreigners who are staying with a short-term status of residence are not covered by most social security systems, and access to necessary medical care, including emergency medical care, is not institutionally guaranteed.
- A lack of education and information dissemination about the social security system, along with the psychological pressure and administrative burdens of applying for assistance, creates the situation that the more vulnerable people are, the more barriers they face in accessing healthcare.
- The sustainability of social security has been called into question due to changes in population structure, such as aging and declining birthrate. Due to post-COVID-19 inflation, disposable income has also declined in many households, and public dissatisfaction with taxes and social security contribution has surfaced.
- As for infectious disease control, HIV countermeasures are symbolic. The disability certification of HIV-positive people introduced in the late 90s, as well as prevention, medical care, and care

⁶² LGBTQ stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, or Questioning, and refers to a broad range of sexual minorities, including these individual

measures in collaboration with communities, have been effective, and overall countermeasures have been highly effective. However, the implementation of effective new technologies, such as Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) and Treatment as Prevention (TasP), which are the results of HIV-related research and development since the 2000s, is lagging behind that of other countries, including developing countries, and is hindering the achievement of goals. As part of the overall infectious disease control measures, there is a need to accelerate the implementation of new technologies through the establishment of new systems and flexible operations.

Goal 4



- Regarding Target 4.1 (Elementary and Secondary Education), the number of children and students not attending elementary and junior high schools reached a record high of 346,482 in FY 2023. The number of recognized cases of bullying in elementary, junior high, and high schools as well as special needs schools, and the number of incidents of violent acts also hit record highs, indicating serious issues in the quality of education.
- Regarding Target 4.5 (Equal Access to Education), there is possibility that 5.7% of elementary and middle school age children with foreign connections are not attending school (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2024). This is due to the government's position that "there is no obligation for parents of children with foreign nationality to attend school" (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology). Also, the number of students receiving education in a form separated from the regular education (i.e., the number of students enrolled in special needs schools and special needs classes) shows an increase, suggesting that there are substantial challenges to promoting inclusive education.
- Target 4.7 (acquiring the knowledge and skills needed for sustainable development) has seen some advance since the inclusion of fostering "the builders of a sustainable society" in the National Curriculum Standards.

Goal 5⁶³



- Gender equality, which cuts across all goals, has not progressed sufficiently. This is also evident from the fact that Japan's ranking in the World Economic Forum's annual Gender Gap Index is 118th out of 146 countries in 2024, continuously stagnating at around 110- 120th place.

⁶³ Reference material: Japan Women's Watch (JAWW), *JAWW NGO Report for Beijing +30* (2024)

- The minimum age for marriage is now 18 for both men and women. However, the selective surname system for married couples has not yet been introduced. Same-sex marriage has also not been introduced.
 - In response to gender-related violence, one-stop centers have been set up in each prefecture, but it is difficult to say that there is sufficient support; for example, the Sexual Assault Crisis Healing Intervention Center Osaka (SACHICO), which has been engaged in pioneering activities in Osaka Prefecture, is facing a crisis of survival. There is also a problem where digital violence disproportionately affects women and girls.
 - There are serious issues with providing access to low-dose pills, emergency contraception, oral abortion pills, etc., that guarantee sexual and reproductive health and rights.
 - Provisional special measures to encourage women's political participation have not been introduced unlike in many countries. The enforcement of the Act on Promotion of Gender Equality in the Political Field, which is called the Japanese Parité Law, in 2018 was a groundbreaking event. However, it remains merely a conceptual law and has not led to substantial progress.
 - According to a survey conducted by the self-advocacy organizations and research institutes, the unemployment rate and non-regular employment rate of transgender people are about three times higher than those of non-LGBTQ people. Around three to five times more transgender individuals fall into the low-income bracket (under 2 million yen annually).
- **Target 5.1 (Elimination of discrimination):** In Japan, the general anti-discrimination clause is included in Article 14 of the Constitution, and relief against unfair discrimination in various fields has been provided through individual laws. However, since there is no comprehensive law that defines and then prohibits discrimination, recommendations have been received repeatedly from various United Nations treaty bodies, such as the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. As stipulated in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, legislation and measures, including the realization of substantive equality with a view to equality of results and the introduction of provisional special measures (positive actions) to resolve inequalities that still remain today as a result of past historical discrimination and inequalities, are required in order to eliminate all forms of discrimination. Progress has been made in abolishing the period prohibiting remarriage in the Civil Code, which has been imposed only on women, unifying the minimum age for marriage for men and women, and reviewing the legitimacy presumption system. The intersecting and complex discrimination experienced by groups, such as Koreans living in Japan, members of discriminated Buraku communities, persons with disabilities, Ainu people, and immigrant women, remains a challenge. It is necessary to address hate speech against these women.

- **Target 5.2 (Elimination of all forms of violence):** Progress has been made in revising the penal code to criminalize non-consensual sexual intercourse, which makes the presence or absence of consent an issue, raising the age of consent from under 13 to under 16, criminalizing sexual violence between spouses and sexual violence against children by caregivers, and abolishing the requirement for rape victims to file a complaint. In the revised Act on the Prevention of Spousal Violence and the Protection of Victims (DV Prevention Act) enacted in 2023, progress has been made in expanding the scope of restraining orders to cases where the victim has suffered serious psychological harm, in adding social media messages to the list of acts that can be subjected to orders prohibiting calls to the victim, in strengthening penalties for violating protective orders, and in stipulating online applications. Meanwhile, with regard to the Act, issues remain: no emergency protection order system, inadequate protection for the domestic violence victims who live away from their abusers, and the lack of the penal system that prohibits domestic violence as a crime or aggravated crime, beyond violation of protective orders. Access to public emergency protection shelters is also very limited.

Since 2018, progress has been made that at least one one-stop center for victims of sexual crimes and sexual violence has been established in each prefecture. However, support levels vary due to the lack of a legal framework. Sexual violence and sexual harassment occur to both women and men, taking advantage of social status or dominant positions. Justice for survivors—especially for childhood victims—still faces many barriers, including entrenched attitudes in media, the corporate world, entertainment industry and society at large. Also, digital violence has become a critical issue and requires attention. Women and girls are disproportionately affected by digital violence through social media, such as online harassment/bullying, revenge pornography, sextortion, doxing, trolling, deepfakes, internet stalking, and illicit filming.

Support groups for young women and victims of sexual violence have been subject to relentless, large-scale, and unfounded online attacks, resulting in restrictions on their activities. When an immigrant woman who complains of domestic violence, the consultation center for women should provide assistance, regardless of their immigration status according to the internal rules. However, it was ignored, resulting in a case where a DV victim was housed and then died without receiving appropriate medical care. There is an urgent need to establish a system to protect immigrant women from violence, regardless of their immigration status.

- **Target 5.3 (Elimination of harmful practices):** Gender equality in education also holds many challenges. Gender disparities in enrollment rates and majors persist, and the proportion of women in school administrative positions is low. Stereotyped career guidance that functions as a “hidden curriculum” has also been reported.
- **Target 5.4 (Provision of public services/social security policies, recognition and evaluation of unpaid childcare, long-term and household work):** Men engage only one-quarter of time in unpaid household-related work when compared to women (Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, *2021 Survey on Time Use and Leisure Activities*). Significant

disparities remain between men and women, affecting women's equal participation in the economic activities. The well-known M-shaped curve for women's labor force participation rates by age is being resolved, but there is a reality that approximately 30% of women quit their jobs when their first child is born. Policies and social security systems are needed to promote an environment where both women and men can balance their family/caregiving responsibilities with work.

Also, according to the relative poverty rate calculated based on the OECD definition (*Comprehensive Survey of Living Conditions* issued by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare), the rate is higher for women (16.9%) than for men (13.8%). In particular, the risk of poverty among elderly women is high (22.8% for women compared to 16.6% for men), and poverty in single-parent households where women make up the majority is also serious. “Feminization of poverty” is remarkable.

- Target 5.5 (Women's participation in political, economic, and public fields and their leadership): As a result of the 2024 Japan House of Representatives election, the proportion of female members of parliament is 15.7% in the House of Representatives and 26.6% in the House of Councilors. Thus, there are still significant challenges to be overcome. The “Act on Promotion of Gender Equality in the Political Field” has been enacted. However, no concrete changes have occurred since it is not enforceable. The government is not active in adopting provisional special systems, such as quota systems and Parité Law introduced in countries around the world, to promote equal political participation. The proportion of women among cabinet ministers was 20% (five out of twenty) in the Second Kishida Cabinet (Second Reshuffle) in September 2023, the highest ever, but decreased to 8% (two out of twenty) in the Second Ishiba Cabinet in 2024.

The Japanese government has provided support from a gender perspective in response to the climate crisis, such as supporting gender-related initiatives in the Green Climate Fund (GCF). Meanwhile, although the number of female negotiators in the Japanese government delegation to the United Nations Climate Change Conferences increased from 33 in 2018 to 44 in 2021, the proportion of women in the entire delegation decreased from 28% to 25%.

- Target 5.6 (Ensuring of universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)): Japanese women have limited access to various modern contraception methods and means to prevent accidental pregnancies, such as low-dose pills, IUDs, and emergency contraception, which can be voluntarily used by women and can be easily obtained (free of charge depending on the country) in many countries, including the other G7 countries. Also, the criminal abortion still exists today and artificial abortion is subject to criminal punishment. Under the Maternal Protection Law, spousal consent is generally required for abortion or sterilization procedures, and individuals must also meet other conditions stipulated by the law.

There are still a limited number of medical institutions that offer oral abortion pills approved by the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare in 2023.

The incorporation of comprehensive sexuality education into public education has not progressed. A "restriction clause" exists, limiting the implementation of sex education, thereby presenting a serious barrier to promoting sex education based on equal relationships between partners. This issue is also deeply related to Target 5.2.

The 2024 Supreme Court decision is a significant development from the viewpoint of sexual and reproductive rights, ruling that the Now-defunct Eugenics Protection Law as unconstitutional is the result of the activities of groups for persons with disabilities, including a group for female persons with disabilities. The Act on the Payment of Compensation, etc. to Persons Who Underwent Eugenic Surgery, etc. Under the Now-defunct Eugenic Protection Law was enforced on January 17, 2025. It is necessary to thoroughly disseminate the Act and provide relief to eligible persons.

Meanwhile, there are problems with dismissals and forced repatriation of technical interns due to pregnancy or childbirth. These fear led to cases of solitary child-births and abandonment. Based on the 2023 government notification, proper implementation is much required thorough prohibition of disadvantageous treatment of technical interns due to pregnancy, etc.

Goal 6



- Regarding Target 6.1 (access to drinking water), Japan has boasted a high water supply coverage rate until now. However, the aging of water infrastructure and an increased frequency in water leaks and damage accidents are urgent issues. Preventive measures associated with increases in water fees and deterioration of water quality are much needed. High concentrations of PFAS have been detected in tap water in several municipalities. Investigations, appropriate responses, and regulations based on global standards are necessary.
- Japan has contributed internationally as the largest donor country in this field, but most of the support is large-scale infrastructure for middle-income countries. There is a need to increase support for low-income countries where access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities remains insufficient.

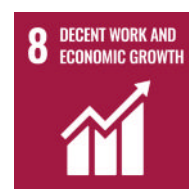
Goal 7

- Support for Decarbonization Leading Areas, ZEB, ZEH, and others can be positive, but policies lack a clear pathway to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The consistency between the Strategic Energy Plan, Japan's 2050 net-zero goal and the global 1.5°C target is unclear.
- Given the relatively poor households currently consist of many elderly households, achieving a balance between climate change and energy poverty countermeasures is a major challenge.
- Japan's support for introducing renewable energy and energy conservation in developing countries is commendable. However, more measures are needed regarding CO₂ emissions and other issues resulting from its support for thermal power plants.



Goal 8

- Non-regular workers who work under low wages and unstable employment conditions account for around 37% of all workers.
- Women accounts for 67.9% of non-regular workers, showing the precarious employment disproportionately affects women. Also, this wage gap persists for general workers; when the salary for men is indexed 100, the female salary stands at 74.8. These have led to a structural “feminization of poverty.” Numerous labor lawsuits highlight the ongoing challenges to realizing equal pay for work of equal value, as stipulated in Target 8.5.
- Global Indicators 8.5.1(Average Hourly Wage of Workers) and 8.5.2(Unemployment Rate) require data on the employment of persons with disabilities, but the government has yet to disclosed those data. Although employment of persons with disabilities in private companies is increasing, many are engaged in unstable, low-paid welfare employment. As a result, 79% of persons with disabilities live below the relative poverty level. Report indicates that the persons with disabilities receive welfare benefits at a rate about seven times higher than that of persons without disabilities.
- Regarding Target 8.7 (elimination of child labor), challenges in Japan include fostering a common understanding of the definition of child labor, data collection, and the formulation of a national action plan. It is also to note that there are cases involving the Act on Punishment of Activities Relating to Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, and the Act on Control and Improvement of Amusement Business, among others, and appropriate response need to be taken. In 2021, the National Police Agency referred 2,969 child pornography cases for prosecution.
- Regarding Target 8.8 (protection of workers' rights), Japan newly introduced the Employment for Skill Development (ESD) Program in place of the Technical Intern Training Program that has been



criticized both domestically and internationally. It is necessary to pay close attention to whether this new program will truly protect of the rights of foreign (immigrant) workers.

Goal 9



- Regarding Target 9.1 (sustainable infrastructure), Japan has previously been assessed as having achieved 100% progress. However, recently accidents caused by aging infrastructure have emerged. Additionally, there is concern about the increase, expansion, and worsening of accidents due to the rise in severe disasters caused by climate change. The Noto Peninsula earthquake in January 2024 occurred in depopulated and remote areas, and it exemplifies the significant impact expected on the provision of emergency support and recovery/reconstruction assistance for large-scale natural disasters, necessitating prompt action.

Goal 10



- As for Global Indicator 10.2.1 (proportion of people living below 50% of median income), data is available by age and gender data, but not by the disability status.
- Regarding Target 10.3 (ensuring equal opportunity and reducing inequalities of outcome), it is essential to continue responding to discrimination events and proceeding with initiatives aimed at eliminating discrimination by appropriately implementing the Act on the Promotion of the Elimination of Buraku Discrimination, the Act for Eliminating Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities, and the Act on the Promotion of Efforts to Eliminate Unfair Discriminatory Speech and Behavior against Persons with Countries of Origin other than Japan. The Ainu Policy Promotion Act has been enacted regarding the Ainu people, and the Act on the Promotion of Public Understanding of the Diversity of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (LGBT Understanding Promotion Act) has been enacted regarding sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC). Further anti-discrimination measures are still necessary. While closely monitoring the situation of human rights relief under these individual laws, the establishment of a national human rights institution should be promptly considered.
- Regarding Target 10.7 (facilitating orderly, safe, and responsible migration and mobility), some industries and business sectors rely heavily on foreign workers. Yet, various discriminatory events, including housing discrimination, continue to occur.
- Since 2020, income inequality has worsened due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Ukraine crisis, which triggered a surge in energy and food prices. Japan is no exception. The Gini coefficient has been rising since the 1980s, and the Japan's relative poverty rate- 15.4% according to the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, based on the OECD definition- is among the worst among developed countries.

Goal 11



- The government has claimed “no data available” on Global Indicator 11.1.1 (proportion of urban population living in slums, informal settlements, or inadequate housing). However, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare has announced survey results on the actual state of homelessness, which could be considered as alternative data.
- As with other goals, the lack of disaggregated data by demographic attributes remains as challenge. For example, Global Indicator 11.2.1 (population with access to public transportation) lacks data on persons with disabilities. Data on mountainous or depopulated areas have also not been disclosed. As for Global Indicator 11.3.2 (proportion of cities with direct participation of civil society in urban planning and management), while the government reports "no data," several advanced cases have emerged.
- Regarding Target 11.5 (significantly reducing the number of deaths and people affected by disasters), the number of disaster-related deaths exceeded the number of disaster deaths in the Noto Peninsula Earthquake that occurred in January 2024. Major challenges remain in responding to the aftermath of the disaster, particularly in providing support for evacuees.
- Women’s participation in disaster prevention councils remains as low as 21.8% in prefectures and 10.8% in municipalities.
- PM2.5 level under Global Indicator 11.6.2 (particulate matter in urban areas) remains relatively high.

Goal 12



- Regarding Target 12.3 (halving per capita food waste), it is a positive development that the amount of Food Loss and Waste reached a record low in FY 2022. However, the economic loss due to Food Loss and Waste is estimated at 4 trillion yen, and greenhouse gas emissions are estimated at 10.46 million t-CO₂; further efforts are needed.
- It is a progressive step forward that human rights clauses were incorporated in public procurement contracts in 2023. A sincere compliance to these clauses is required.

Goal 13



- Japan's upcoming national reduction target formulated as a climate change measure must be consistent with the global 1.5°C goal. Policies to promote renewable energy and to reduce fossil fuel use are necessary to abate CO₂. It is also necessary to strengthen measures to reduce methane emissions from rice paddies and to recover fluorocarbons.
- Japan's initiative to promote adaptation measures, which are inclusive of highly vulnerable groups, both domestically and internationally, can be appreciated. However, specific adaptation measures for the elderly, persons with disabilities, and people facing economic hardship have not been clarified. Support for developing countries also requires the implementation of resilience-building measures for women, children, migrants and indigenous peoples.
- Japan has provide support with a gender perspective in addressing the climate crisis, including initiatives related to gender in the Green Climate Fund (GCF). However, while the number of female negotiators in the Japanese government delegation to the United Nations Climate Change Conferences increased from 33 in 2018 to 44 in 2021, the overall proportion of women in the delegation decreased from 28% to 25%.

Goal 14



- Regarding Target 14.1 (preventing and reducing marine pollution), Japan ranks second in the world in per capita emissions of plastic packaging waste. Japan should leverage its strength in proper treatment, recycling, and circular use to actively engage in the adoption of the Plastics Convention.
- Progress has been made on Targets 14.4 (restoring fish stocks to maximum sustainable yield) and 14.6 (eliminating subsidies that contribute to overfishing).
- Regarding Target 14.5 (conservation of coastal and marine areas), Japan is urged to ratify the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement or High Seas Treaty), adopted under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. This agreement also concerns on Target 15.c (enhancing support for combating poaching and illegal trafficking of protected species).

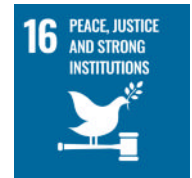
Goal 15



- Target 15.7 (eliminating poaching and illegal trafficking) has seen no clear progress on controlling movements of wildlife. Illegal imports of insects and amphibians as pets continue under insufficient regulation.

- Regarding Target 15.8 (preventing the introduction of invasive species), while international cooperation on identification of invasion routes for alien species has progressed, establishing an early detection and response system remains a challenge.

Goal 16



- Of 24 global indicators, the government has claimed “no data available” for 10 indicators, indicating an urgent need for improvement.
- Regarding Target 16.2 (ending violence against children), it is commendable that the Japanese government actively participated the First Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence Against Children held in Colombia in November 2024, where it expressed its pledge and support for international framework. This engagement should be reflected in a revised version of the “National Action Plan for Ending Violence Against Children (2021)” that delivers stronger results.
- Regarding Target 16.5 (substantially reducing corruption and bribery), the OECD Bribery Working Group reviewed Japan and noted its insufficient response to bribery cases of foreign public officials.
- As for Global Indicators 16.7.1 (proportion of positions in national and local public institutions compared to the national distribution, by sex, age, disability, and population group) and 16.7.2 (proportion of people who believe decision-making is inclusive and responsive), disaggregated data by attributes other than gender have not been disclosed.
- Regarding Global Indicator 16.a.1 (existence of independent national human rights institutions), Japan has repeatedly received recommendations from the United Nations human rights treaty bodies and other mechanism. While determining the situation of human rights relief based on individual laws, prompt consideration is required.
- As for Global Indicator 16.b.1 (proportion of population reporting feeling discriminated against or harassed within the last 12 months), the Article 14 of the Japan’s Constitution includes the general anti-discrimination clause, and remedy for unfair discriminations are available through individual laws. However, Japan lacks a comprehensive anti-discrimination law that defines and prohibits discrimination. More appropriate responses are needed for diverse forms of discrimination experienced by people with different backgrounds.
- At the local government level, the introduction of same-sex partner certification systems is progressing, and some cases are eligible for welfare and rights protection by local governments. However, there are no national-level systems for legal protection of same-sex partners, access to social security, or prohibition of discrimination for same-sex partners. Additionally, the "Act on Promotion of Understanding of the Diversity in Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity" (commonly known as the "Understanding Promotion Act") was enacted in 2023, but the formulation

of a basic plan is not yet underway. National-level initiatives are still limited to certain areas, such as labor administration by the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare.

Goal 17



- Japan's ODA-to-GNI ratio is 0.44% (in 2023), and the ODA-to-GNI ratio for least developed countries (LDC) is 0.12% (in 2023), both of which are on an upward trend. Since 2000, Japan has demonstrated leadership in shaping global health policies, and has made significant financial and technical contributions to multilateral cooperation in the health field, such as the Global Fund (Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria) and the Gavi Alliance, etc., earning global appreciation. Under the COVID-19 pandemic, Japan further expanded multilateral cooperation in the health field and assistance to ensure financial liquidity for developing countries, which deserves more appreciation. In an era of harsh inflation and multiple crisis, Japan must not follow the trend of cutting ODAs, but it should instead demonstrate global leadership in solidarity so as to increase the trust of the Global South countries. Based on Target 17.2, Japan should go further and set time-bound targets for the ODA-to-GNI ratio of 0.7% and the ODA-to-GNI ratio for LDCs of 0.15% to 0.2%.
- The amount for ODA (bilateral grants, including grant aid and technical cooperation, multilateral cooperation, budgetary contributions for yen loans, etc.) in the general account budget has remained between 550 billion yen and 570 billion yen over the past 10 years. The increase in Japan's ODA according to the OECD statistics is mainly realized through loans that focus on economic development. Despite growing funding needs from NGOs, their share in ODA has remained unchanged and low at 1% compared to the DAC average of 8%. In order to reverse the decline in social development due to COVID-19 and inflation/debt crises, and to improve the situation of the most vulnerable groups, such as the poor in low-income countries, Japan must increase ODA in general account budgets and expand social development and humanitarian assistance. As funding sources for economic development in developing countries diversify, a greater proportion of ODA should be now directed to social development in least developed countries to improving the livelihood of the most vulnerable groups. As for promoting energy transitions in developing countries, more active promotion in decarbonization is necessary.
- Japan's active position among developed countries in supplying short-term funds to resolve the deepening debt crisis and to expand financial liquidity of developing countries is commendable. Meanwhile, in order to strengthen global partnerships and reduce inequality among nations (Goal 10), Japan should take bold leadership in globalizing and democratizing the international financial architecture centered on the United Nations, beyond the traditional dichotomy of developed and developing countries.

(3) Evaluation of initiatives by stakeholders

A. Media trends⁶⁴

The United Nations has launched the initiative “SDG Media Compact” to raise awareness of the SDGs. Of approximately 400 registered members from 160 countries across five continents, Japan has 220 member companies (as of March 2024), the largest number in the world and accounting for more than half of the total. It can be said that the penetration of the SDGs in Japan is characterized by larger media influence than in other countries. For example, the United Nations Information Centre has called on the registered media of SDG Media Compact in Japan to join the climate campaign “Promise of 1.5°C.” Every year, many domestic media plan various initiatives for this campaign, including special programs by NHK and five commercial broadcasting stations. This is unrivaled in the world.

In the *10th SDGs Awareness Survey* (April 2024) by The Asahi Shimbun, 88.7% of people nationwide reported that they had heard the term SDGs. Reflecting the new course of study implemented since 2020, 55.0% of teenage respondents selected “at school” when asked about how they had learned about the SDGs, which was extremely high compared with the total result (7.9%). According to Hakuhodo's *Sei-Katsu-Sha's Sustainable Purchasing Behavior Survey 2024* (August 2024), 30.0% of teenage respondents reported that they knew the details of the SDGs, which was overwhelmingly higher than other age groups including those in their 20s (14.3%), 30s (9.1%), 40s (6.6%), 50s (6.7%), 60s (6.2%), and 70s (5.1%). The results suggest positive effects of learning at school and other opportunities. Considering these trends, while it is likely that media have played a role in broadly spreading the SDGs to different generations across the country, educational opportunities seem to be where people have obtained deeper knowledge. Below, we will look at the detailed situation of the five main media outlets.

(i) Newspaper

Being reliable media with great social impacts, more than 100 newspapers are available in Japan, including general and sports newspapers. Main examples are given in the following categories: national papers (5), block papers (3), and regional papers.

- National papers: The Asahi Shimbun, which took the initiative in this topic; Nikkei Group, which demonstrated overwhelming influence on corporate managers; as well as The Yomiuri Shimbun, The Mainichi Shimbun, and The Sankei Shimbun, which demonstrated influence on many readers. Since they individually disseminated information on the SDGs on a daily basis, in a short-term, and in an intensive manner, they seemed to have played a key role in penetration into a wide range of people nationwide.

As a main example, in January 2017, The Asahi Shimbun Company took the initiative by launching “Looking at the SDGs with Ms. Hiroko Kuniya,” the project featuring the journalist who is influential among Japanese business managers. The impact has been enormous. The

⁶⁴ The section on media trends was prepared with the cooperation of Mr. Masahiro Kawatei, with the collaboration of Asahi Shimbun, Nikkei Group, Fuji Television, and Hakuhodo DY Media Partners.

company has reached approximately 3.65 million people through the paper and about 6.59 million people through ID registration by organizing various initiatives, including the “Change 2030 with the SDGs” series in the paper, the SDGs Action! information site leveraging strengths as a newspaper company, and student awards.

Nikkei Group, taking advantage of its access to business managers, launched the Nikkei SDGs Forum in 2018 to disseminate SDGs initiatives. The program attracted 26 major companies. They also provided support services for sustainability management and matching analysis between the SDGs and businesses. Their impact on the business community has been extremely large through such initiatives as the “Nikkei SDGs Management Survey” and the “Nikkei SDGs Management Awards,” which started in 2019 to comprehensively evaluate SDGs management.

The Yomiuri Shimbun used the popular character Chico-chan from NHK in their projects for the SDGs. The Yomiuri Chukosei Shimbun, the company’s newspaper for junior high and high school students, has had a monthly series “SDGs Newspaper” page since April 2020, featuring schools across Japan working on the SDGs. Reports highlighting junior high and high school students have encouraged young people’s efforts, also helping spread the SDGs broadly to their families and friends.

The Mainichi Newspapers is developing the series “Working Together for an Inclusive Society: The SDGs to Build the Future” and “The SDGs for the Future.” Sankei Shimbun is developing the “The SDGs: Acting Now for the Future” series.

- Block papers: Covering multiple municipalities with strong support from readers in the region, they are thought to have contributed to the penetration of SDG localization in their respective areas. More specific cases includes that the Hokkaido Shimbun Press uses the original logo “SDGs: Towards a Sustainable Future” to introduce stories about local industries and issues close to everyday life. The Chunichi Shimbun has appointed people with a strong interest in and dedication to the SDGs as navigators in its program “Starting the SDGs Together.” With the support of companies, educational institutions, industry groups, and others, they cover local initiatives from readers’ viewpoint. The Nishi-Nippon Shimbun has launched a project titled “Let’s Create the Future: Make Fukuoka SDGs” to discuss the future with children through the coverage of business groups in Fukuoka working on the SDGs.
- Regional papers: They have helped people have a sense of ownership of the SDGs by covering topics close to everyday life such as food, clothing, and housing in the region through SDGs projects in their respective papers. Some examples of the projects are: “Our SDGs: Let’s Introduce Aomori’s Initiatives to the World!” by The To-o Nippo Press, “SDGs from Akita” by Akita Sakigake Shimpō, “Let’s Change the Future from Iwate with the SDGs!” by The Iwate Nippo, “Yamagata SDGs Action” by Yamagata Shimbun, “Miyagi SDGs Farm” by Kahoku Shimpō Publishing, “Fukushima SDGs Project” by Fukushima-Minpo, “Together to the Future 2030” by Kanagawa Shimbun, “Yamanashi SDGs Project” by The Yamanashi Nichinichi Shimbun, “SDGs

Project to Support Future Adults” by The Niigata Nippo, “Nagano SDGs Project” by The Shinano Mainichi Shimbun, “Hito to Mirai” by The Hokkoku Shimbun, “Keiji SDGs Project” by The Kyoto Shimbun, “Hyogo SDGs Hub” by The Kobe Shimbun, “All for SDGs Hiroshima” by The Chugoku Shimbun, “Tokushima SDGs Action” by Tokushima Shimbun, “Oita SDGs Creating the Future” by Oita Godo News, “Kumanichi SDGs Action Project” by Kumamotonichinichi Shimbun, “The SDGs Kagoshima” by Minami Nippon Shimbun, and “The SDGs from Okinawa” by The Ryukyu Shimpō.

(ii) Television

Being a visual medium, television has the greatest reach among various media with significant effects in giving concrete images of the SDGs. The following describes main examples by terrestrial key stations, stations in major terrestrial cities (Osaka, Nagoya, Hokkaido, and Fukuoka), and regional stations.

Network programs of key stations have introduced the SDGs and their examples to people across the country in an easy-to-understand manner. NTV has launched the “Good for the Planet” campaign based on the idea that what is good for the planet is good for people. They have created a theme song and appointed supporters, mascots, and announcers for the project to cover the 17 SDG goals through various channels, including their news, information, and variety shows. TBS has appointed entertainers, celebrities, announcers, and others as TBS SDGs Ambassadors for the “Week to Make the Earth Smile” campaign. They have been introducing corporate initiatives for the SDGs in TV, radio, and BS programs, featuring people taking action across Japan and the world. Fuji Television began broadcasting the world's first regular SDGs program “Future Runners” in July 2018. Every week, the program introduces individuals and organizations dedicated to solving SDG issues. Although the program is broadcast only in the Tokyo metropolitan area, it is archived on the official website and has spread throughout the country. The program has been available with English subtitles from the time of the original broadcast and also been reported at the United Nations Headquarters. TV Asahi, through its BS station capable of digging deep into themes, disseminates information to viewers interested in the SDGs in the program “Pass the Baton: Taking a Step Toward the SDGs.”

Stations in major cities (Kansai, Chubu, Hokkaido, and Fukuoka), covering broader municipalities, have a great regional influence and contribute to SDG localization. Some main examples by individual companies in the Kansai area include “YTV Sustainability Project” by Yomiuri Telecasting, “MBS SDGs Project” by Mainichi Broadcasting System, “Kantele SDGs” by Kansai Television, and “Asu Mirai Week” by Asahi Broadcasting. In the Nagoya area, a joint effort “SDGs in Progress” has been organized by five commercial stations in addition to individual efforts such as “Let’s Take a Local View on the SDGs! Mirai News” by Tokai Television and “Sports SDGs” by Aichi Television. Examples in the other areas include “Let’s Create the Future: Make Fukuoka SDGs” by RKB Mainichi Broadcasting in Fukuoka and “SDGs from Hokkaido to the Future” by Hokkaido Broadcasting.


Regional stations have helped people develop a sense of ownership of the SDGs by covering news and topics familiar to viewers, such as local issues, food, clothing, and housing. Main examples include regional programs in line with those planned by their affiliated networks, such as “Good for the Planet” by NTV-affiliated stations and “SDGs Week” by TBS-affiliated stations. These stations also introduce companies working on the SDGs and next-generation initiatives in their own news and information programs.

(iii) Radio

People have access to radio in various situations, including when they are at home, in the office, going shopping, and engaging in leisure activities. Radio is also reaching a growing number of people of the next generation as podcast gains popularity. Both FM and AM stations have helped promote the SDGs on national networks and localize the SDGs for multiple generations at regional stations by covering familiar themes. Some main examples are as follows.

Among FM stations on the national network, J-Wave has offered information through various programs with the key phrase “Future Is Yours: Imagine & Choice” based on the idea that the future is created by our imagination and choice. “Sustainadays” by Tokyo FM is another example. One of the initiatives by AM stations is “SDGs Magazine” by Nippon Broadcasting System, which also works together with Fuji Television and BS Fuji to develop a joint project “Have Fun Taking Action! SDGs Project.” Nippon Cultural Broadcasting has set the theme “SDGs Voice: Turning Your Voice into People’s Voice” and introduced initiatives in Japan in their events and programs. Radio Nikkei reaches diverse groups of listeners through a variety of programs by, for example, offering “ESG A to Z” for business people.

At regional stations, FM Hokkaido and FM North Wave have jointly developed “SDGs x Hokkaido Farming: Sustainable Hokkaido” to discuss the future of agriculture in Hokkaido. The other FM stations that have developed programs on the SDGs are FM Aomori, FM Iwate, FM Yamagata, Yamagata Broadcasting, FM Akita, FM Sendai, FM Gunma, FM Tochigi, FM Yokohama, Bay FM, FM Niigata, FM Nagano, FM Fuji, FM Shizuoka, FM Toyama, FM Fukui, Zip FM, FM Gifu, FM Aichi, FM Mie, FM Shiga, FM Osaka, FM 802, Kiss FM, FM Sanin, FM Yamaguchi, FM Kagawa, FM Ehime, FM Tokushima, Cross FM, Love FM, FM Nagasaki, FM Kagoshima, and FM Okinawa. The AM stations actively featuring the SDGs include Radio Nippon, Hokkaido Broadcasting, Akita Broadcasting, Yamagata Broadcasting, Tohoku Broadcasting, Radio Fukushima, Broadcasting System of Niigata, Shin-Etsu Broadcasting, Yamanashi Broadcasting System, Shizuoka Broadcasting System, Kitanihon Broadcasting, Hokuriku Broadcasting, Fukui Broadcasting, CBC Radio, Tokai Radio, Gifu Broadcasting System, KBS Kyoto, ABC Radio, MBS Radio, Radio Osaka, Radio Kansai, Sanyo Broadcasting, Broadcasting System of San-in, RCC Broadcasting, Yamaguchi Broadcasting, Nishinippon Broadcasting, Nankai Broadcasting, Shikoku Broadcasting, Kochi Broadcasting, RKB Mainichi, Kyushu Asahi Broadcasting, Nagasaki Broadcasting, Oita Broadcasting System, Kumamoto Broadcasting, Miyazaki Broadcasting, Minaminihon Broadcasting, and Ryukyu Broadcasting. The



regional stations of almost all municipalities therefore have disseminated information using themes relevant to their respective communities to help “localize” the SDGs.

(iv) Magazine

Magazines help readers develop a sense of ownership of the SDGs by communicating through various vehicles according to the interests of different generations. Major domestic publishers such as Shogakukan, Kodansha, Shueisha, Fusosha, Kobunsha, Magazine House, Hearst Fujingaho, Shufu To Seikatsu Sha, Nikkei Business Publications, and Asahi Shimbun Publications actively publish SDG projects in popular magazines as well as mooks (magazine-like books). For example, among fashion and lifestyle magazines, an entire issue was dedicated to the SDGs in *FraU*, and detailed articles have been published in *Elle*, *Esse*, *Spur*, *Story*, and *Hanako*. As for outdoor magazines, the long-established *Be-Pal* and others have been actively featuring the SDGs and publishing articles on this theme.

Of the examples mentioned above in the four major media, many are not part of SDG Media Compact, reflecting how actively Japanese media are covering the SDGs. Such active coverage of the SDGs is partly due to the growing momentum for the SDGs, which can lead to potential opportunities for business and branding. Yet, many media report that their primary motivation is rather self-directed. Examples include taking measures in such issues as human rights, resources, and CO₂ emissions as part of their corporate social responsibility; fulfilling their mission as local media; addressing local issues; experiencing disasters; supporting municipalities; and finding relevance to featured topics. As the SDGs penetrated the country, employees of media companies may have developed a sense of ownership of the theme, which may have changed their business mindsets and awareness of crisis and resulted in behavioral changes.

(v) Social Media (SNS)

In addition to conventional media, the influence of social media (SNS) in promoting the SDGs is also growing in Japan. In particular, many companies actively use X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, etc. in order to expand points of contact with consumers and improve the brand image. By introducing sustainable products, ways to reduce Food Loss and Waste, and other relevant information, they have provided platforms for exchanging opinions and received many views and posts.

Also, social media posting by influencers with an interest in the SDGs has also demonstrated strong influence. Popular comedians and artists are actively disseminating information on social media, offering powerful opportunities for young Japanese people to become interested in the SDGs. For example, there are data showing that in 2021, social media posts related to the SDGs increased by about 238% from the previous year.

B. Cross-cutting issues (gender and youth)

B-1 Gender

1.1 Gender initiatives and their evaluations in Japan's international cooperation

Over the years, Japanese civil society has carried out initiatives related to gender mainstreaming, girls' education, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and maternal and child health in developing countries, together with the Japanese government and JICA, and in collaboration with international organizations such as UN Women, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNHCR, and IPPF. A wide range of activities are included in these initiatives, from projects such as direct service provision and awareness raising at the local level in developing countries to awareness raising targeting policy makers such as Japanese and Asia-Pacific parliamentarians, as well as participation in and lobbying at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) by the Human Rights Council. In recent years, they actively collaborate with the government in issues related to WPS (Women, Peace, and Security). These activities have also helped improve Japan's presence in international cooperation and multilateral diplomacy related to gender. Meanwhile, delays in addressing gender issues within Japan have had a negative impact on Japan's gender efforts overseas. Improving the domestic situation is essential also for advancing international cooperation on gender.

Initiatives based on JICA's *Global Agenda* (cooperation strategies for global issues) and their *Cluster Strategies* relating to the elimination of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) can be highly rated. Yet, gender mainstreaming needs to be carried out beyond gender-specific programs and expanded to all programs in a cross-cutting manner. Measures are in progress, including the development of guidelines, to facilitate gender mainstreaming in various fields, but it is necessary to enhance awareness in each field. Meanwhile, the level of gender awareness is low in other institutions which NGOs cooperate with, and there is a delay in awareness, such as having to explain its necessity from the beginning.

SRHR (sexual and reproductive health rights) in the field of emergency humanitarian assistance, such as conflicts and disasters, is clearly needed. However, SRHR has been considered lower in priority than other issues, thus not receiving appropriate support.

Under the *National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Third Edition (2023-2028)*, in addition to international cooperation, the country is also to promote WPS domestically. Japan has failed to promote WPS domestically, reflecting delays in gender awareness and initiatives in Japanese society. There are many challenges also in gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment on the front line of disaster relief, reconstruction, etc. due to the lack of vision to nurture female leaders in normal times. Also, women's equal participation in decision making, from central bodies to the front line, is not advancing smoothly. Even in ministries and government agencies, international departments maybe aware, but their progress has not sufficiently transmitted to other departments.

1.2 Gender and LGBTQ initiatives and progress evaluation

The United Nations recognizes that LGBTQ issues are related to human rights and sustainable development. For example, the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) has published a guidance note that includes “LGBT persons”. In the Major Group and other Stakeholders (MGOS) related to sustainable development, LGBTQ is positioned as one of the other Stakeholders. A Swedish LGBTIQ+ organization RSFL (Swedish Federation of LGBTIQ Rights) serves as the secretariat of the group. RSFL lists Goals 3 (health), Goal 4 (education), Goal 5 (gender equality), Goal 8 (economic growth and employment), and Goal 16 (peace and justice) as issues particularly close to the LGBTQ community.

Regarding these issues, various nonprofit organizations (NPOs), social enterprises, and other groups organized by LGBTQ people themselves together with their supporters have carried out a wide range of services, education and awareness raising, cultural activities, policy proposals, campaign activities, etc. Since the 2000s, the range of such efforts has expanded rapidly, and the positioning of LGBTQ in society has changed drastically. Furthermore, local governments have also accelerated their efforts since the 2000s. Currently, more than 500 local governments have introduced same-sex partnership certification systems, applying their social security systems to LGBTQ. Since the 2000s, private companies have also been actively working to eliminate discrimination and prejudice within the organizations, such as applying employee benefits to same-sex partners. Meanwhile, efforts at the national level have not necessarily kept up with the above developments.

Japan has been a member of the "United Nations LGBTI Core Group" since its inception. Although Japan as a country is not a member of the "Equal Rights Coalition," an international organization focused on LGBTQ human rights with many members from Latin America and European countries, government officials participate as observers in international meetings. Domestically, there is hope for progress in legal frameworks and initiatives that align with efforts in regions and countries such as Europe, Latin America, Republic of South Africa, Nepal, Thailand, and Taiwan.

1.3 Keidanren's initiatives for gender mainstreaming

Keidanren has called on all member companies to support the “# Here We Go 203030” campaign, which aims to achieve 30% representation of women in executive positions by 2030. According to the results of a study on the share of women among executives⁶⁵, as of July 2024, it has steadily increased to 15.6% (up 243.59% from FY 2017 and up 52.27% from FY 2021) among companies listed on the First Section or the Prime Market of the Tokyo Stock Exchange, which are targeted by the government. To further increase female executives, a key issue will be increasing the number of internal appointments. According to a survey conducted by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, as of October 2023, the share of women in management positions equivalent to section chiefs or higher was

⁶⁵ https://www.gender.go.jp/kaigi/danjo_kaigi/siryō/pdf/ka73-2.pdf (in Japanese)

12.7%⁶⁶, the highest since 2009 when the ministry started collecting the data. There are challenges remain, such as slow progress in the appointment of women as executive officers responsible for business execution, as well as disparities in appointment among different industries and business categories. Nevertheless, improvements have been seen in efforts to promote women's active participation in Japanese companies.

1.4 Women's Participation and Leadership in Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs)

The SDGs will not be achieved without the transformation of SMEs, which account for 99% of Japanese companies. It is important to focus on the transformation of SMEs along with the promotion of activities by large enterprises.

Regarding the economic sector, measures have been taken for about 40 years since the Equal Employment Opportunity Law was enacted in 1985. Despite these efforts, Japan ranked 118th out of 146 countries in the Gender Gap Index 2024, the lowest among major developed countries (G7), showing no improvement. According to the analysis of its factors, the main efforts were enlightenment and support. Since these would not promote actors' commitment or initiatives, government and economic organizations are still far from achieving their own gender equality goals. Despite various measures taken in the past 40 years, we must say that there has been a lack of commitment, showing determination and will to address the issue, as well as leadership by administrative agencies, economic organizations, etc. to set an example in addressing it.

In order to achieve gender equality in SMEs, it is necessary to cultivate a new culture that incorporates diversity, including women, within the current male-dominated society. Along with some major factors preventing its realization, such as unconscious bias and the glass ceiling, failure to promote initiatives that embrace the set goals can be another issue hindering progress. For example, some say they do not understand the intention of setting the target “increasing the share of women in leadership positions to at least 30%.” More specifically, many SMEs express disagreement with the goal. Some feel reluctant as it looks just a formality while others say, “Why 30%? Shouldn't we choose people based on ability instead of quota?” and “Isn't that preferential treatment for women?”

Also, a lack of basic knowledge (a lack of common understanding) among local companies is a major factor hindering their activities. For example, various keywords related to women, such as “women's active participation,” “gender equality,” “genderless and gender-free,” and “diversity, D&I, and DE&I,” have emerged one after another. But the meaning of each keyword has been misunderstood, with such comments as, “It is strange to focus on women just because it is the age of diversity” and “The term ‘women’ itself is discriminatory because we live in the genderless age.” Such misunderstanding has indeed disrupted discussions and stopped the progress of activities. In order to overcome this situation, it is necessary to make efforts to broadly raise awareness of misconceptions and promote basic knowledge.

⁶⁶ <https://www.mhlw.go.jp/toukei/list/dl/71-r05/02.pdf> (in Japanese)

1.5 Specific initiatives for gender mainstreaming in Japan: the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry Young Entrepreneurs Group as an example

The Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry Young Entrepreneurs Group (Japan YEG) is an organization composed of 32,400 members from the 416 Chamber of Commerce and Industry Young Entrepreneurs Groups across Japan. It is one of the largest organizations led by young SME managers in Japan. Its participants, in their 20s to 50s, are active presidents and management leaders driving the frontline operations, playing a core role in transforming society at a local level. Japan YEG organizes various initiatives on themes essential for SMEs, such as acquisition of diverse talent and women's empowerment, to resolve worker shortages that will become increasingly serious in the future. For example, they provide a variety of training programs and seminars to nurture talent for future leadership in communities. Meanwhile, since the term of officers is only one year, activities are often organized as one-off programs without continuation, making it difficult to foster culture and build a system as an organization. Recognizing this weakness, they make efforts to enable continuous activities.

The following initiatives have taken place with the aim of continuing activities and fostering culture without annual interruption. It has been indicated that, like companies, organizations need to develop medium- to long-term plans and commit to efforts beyond a single fiscal year to nurture and ensure the establishment of a solid culture.

- FY 2021: Publishing the *Sustainable Declaration* at the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry Young Entrepreneurs Group National Conference. The declaration outlines the issues Japan YEG should address over multiple fiscal years (setting multiple themes contributing to achieving the SDGs, such as gender and carbon neutrality).
- FY 2022: Supporting the organization Happy Woman for the International Women's Day sponsored by the United Nations Information Centre
- FY 2023: For the first time in history, a female president was appointed. The Japan YEG (Young Entrepreneurs Group) executive committee achieved a record high of 30% female representation among its chairpersons. Additionally, they are actively engaging in various collaborative projects, such as conducting leadership development training in cooperation with the Cabinet Office, organizing joint initiatives with HAPPYWOMAN, a project supported by the United Nations Information Centre, and partnering with external organizations like Yoshimoto Kogyo Co., Ltd., which involves SDGs ambassadors.

- FY 2024: Since FY 2021, data show improvements in the number of female presidents and the share of female executives at the 416 Chamber of Commerce and Industry Young Entrepreneurs Groups nationwide. They are developing a strategic plan to further strengthen efforts in FY 2025.

1.6 Gender initiatives in Labor unions

The Japanese Trade Union Confederation (Rengo), the national center of labor unions, formulated the *Gender Equality Promotion Plan* in 2021. This is based on the idea that labor unions should realize a gender-equal society as they promote gender equality internally and carry out their movements. Aiming for “203050,” which means raising the female participation rate in all decision-making processes to 50% by 2030, labor unions are also working with the goal of first increasing the share of women on executive committees to 30%.

B-2 Youth

The two steering committee groups of the SDGs Promotion Platform for the Next Generation separately evaluated the progress of the SDGs.

2.1 G7/G20 Youth Japan

A study on the happy society young people seek and what is necessary to realize it was conducted based on the results of past surveys. The study found that sustainable development of the Japanese economy would be essential in the post-2030 agenda. The study also identified three critical elements: mental, physical, and planetary health; corporate and personal growth; and domestic and international connections. Incorporating young people’s free thinking unbounded by fixed concepts or conventions, as well as voices of mature youth with achievements and experience, can lead to the creation of new value concepts. Yet, it is found out that considering limited opportunities for youth to have discretion and influence, it is necessary to secure and expand places for groups representing the opinions of youth to play an active role.

2.2 Japan Youth Platform for Sustainability (JYPS)

Looking at the progress of the SDGs from a youth perspective based on the survey conducted by JYPS in 2024, while several developments have been seen, many issues still require improvements even in the fields determined as having achieved. First, support for reducing financial burden is making progress thanks to the strengthening of academic support. But there is still a shortage of comprehensive support for expenses other than tuition fees (examination fees, reference books, transportation

expenses, etc.). Furthermore, many young people still think that regional inequalities, including the ones between urban and rural areas, have not been resolved. Regarding efforts to raise awareness of SDGs-related education and well-being, while a system is being developed based on young people's own values, its framework is still insufficient. Broader awareness raising and promotion of concrete actions are needed. In particular, although awareness of environmental issues is high, many young people do not know how to put it into action, suggesting the need of support from educational institutions and the government.

As for enhancing youth participation, opportunities for participation need to be expanded. There is also an urgent need to formulate a system to eliminate disparities between urban and rural areas. Opportunities to reflect youth opinions are limited, and it is necessary to provide more places for their participation. To achieve this, a system needs to be developed in line with the *Pact for the Future*, which is an outcome document of the UN Summit of the Future 2024. The pact includes investing in children and young people as well as strengthening meaningful youth participation at the international and national levels.⁶⁷ Regarding youth participation in Japan, according to the *Survey Results on the Appointment of Children and Young People as Members of Councils, Panels, etc. Based on the General Principles for Child-Related Measures, etc.*⁶⁸, it is evident that the proportion of members aged from their teens to thirties on councils and advisory committees of various ministries and agencies is in the range of 1%.

C. Trends by sector

C-1 Business trends

3.1 Business

3.1.1 Progress in incorporating the SDGs into management strategies

The Japan Business Federation (Keidanren) has promoted SDGs initiatives by member companies since revising the *Charter of Corporate Behavior* in 2017. According to the *3rd Questionnaire Survey on the Implementation of Keidanren's Charter of Corporate Behavior* (Keidanren Survey) conducted in 2023⁶⁹, 80% of companies engage in reporting and communication in their SDGs initiatives, a significant increase from 31% in the previous survey (2020). Also, the proportion of companies that reported integrating sustainability into management also increased sharply from 39% to 77%. Thus, Japanese companies incorporate the SDGs into their management strategies and are actively working toward Society 5.0 for SDGs, which solves internal and external social issues and realizes sustainable growth

⁶⁷ United Nations. Summit of the Future Outcome Documents : Pact for the Future, Global Digital Compact and Declaration on Future Generations. (2024) <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/406333?ln=en&v=pdf>

⁶⁸ Children and Families Agency. Survey Results on the Appointment of Children and Young People as Members of Councils, Panels, etc. Based on the General Principles for Child-Related Measures, etc. (2024) https://www.cfa.go.jp/assets/contents/node/basic_page/field_ref_resources/473dbbf4-3379-4212-8abc-b3c99cfd753/7aec6707/20240819_councils_shingikai_iken_senmon_473dbbf4_03.pdf (in Japanese)

⁶⁹ https://www.keidanren.or.jp/policy/2024/005_kekka.pdf (in Japanese)

simultaneously through innovation, and various successful examples have emerged⁷⁰. These can also be confirmed in the video collection (Theater 5.0) showing solutions through innovation in an easy-to-understand manner.

3.1.2 Integrated promotion of GX, CE, and NP

(1) Green transformation (Goal 13)

Based on the *Keidanren Carbon Neutrality Action Plan*, Keidanren has been strongly promoting proactive efforts for green transformation (GX) to achieve carbon neutrality (CN) by 2050. As a result, total CO₂ emissions from domestic business activities in all sectors (industry, energy conversion, operations, and transportation) in FY 2023 (59 industries) were 468.09 million t-CO₂ (approximately 42.3% of Japan's total CO₂ emissions⁷¹), down approximately 5.2% from FY 2021 and down about 16.8% from FY 2017.

Furthermore, they published the *Recommendations for Advancing the AZEC Initiative* in 2024, in support of the Asia Zero Emission Community (AZEC), to promote GX in the Asian region based on Japan's experience.

(2) Circular economy (Goal 12)

Keidanren is promoting recycling of resources such as plastics through the formulation of the *Voluntary Action Plan for Establishing a Sound Material-Cycle Society* and its annual follow-up (46 industries participate). Also, in 2021, they established the Japan Partnership for Circular Economy (J4CE) with the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry in order to accelerate transition to a circular economy. As of February 2025, more than 210 companies and organizations are participating. They also actively disseminate examples of advanced initiatives by Japanese companies nationally and internationally by, for example, publishing a collection of notable case studies three times (in 2021, 2022, and 2024). Their other efforts include public-private dialogues⁷² to sort out issues aimed at realizing CE and business exchange meetings to promote collaboration beyond industrial and corporate boundaries.

(3) Biodiversity and nature conservation (Goals 14 and 15)

Keidanren has promoted corporate efforts for biodiversity conservation through the “Keidanren Initiative for Biodiversity Conservation” and other activities. As of the end of August 2024, the initiative has 351 participating companies and organizations and has shared 192 examples of initiatives.

⁷⁰ <https://www.keidanrendgs.com/innovationforsdgs>

⁷¹ There are differences in the methods and scope of calculation between this survey and *GHG Emissions Data of Japan (1990 to 2023): Provisional Data* by the National Institute for Environmental Studies, which is the reference source for the FY 2023 CO₂ emissions of Japan as a whole, as they have different purposes and backgrounds. It should be noted, therefore, that the coverage ratio derived from comparison between the two sources is only for the reference purposes. The coverage ratio for the transportation sector is calculated based on domestic CO₂ emissions excluding overseas departures and arrivals.

⁷² Held 16 times in four years

Furthermore, Keidanren and the Keidanren Nature Conservation Council (KNCC) have conducted seminars, etc. to promote understanding of TNFD (the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures) as members of the TNFD Consulting Group Japan, which was organized for the purpose of promoting understanding of the TNFD. As a result, Japanese companies represented the largest number of TNFD Early Adopters, 80 of 320 registered companies across the world. The number further increased to 140 by January 2025. In addition, they are working to change corporate behavior through public-private dialogue and collaboration regarding the *Transition Strategies Toward Nature Positive Economy* (2024), which was jointly formulated by four ministries⁷³ such as the Ministry of the Environment.

Also, since 1993, the Keidanren Nature Conservation Fund (KNCF) has continued to subsidize nature conservation projects by NGOs and the like in developing countries, mainly in Asia. To date, the total number of supported projects is 1,737, and the total amount of support is approximately 5.1 billion yen. Furthermore, since 2023, they are contributing 300 million yen over five years to the “Community Development and Knowledge Management for the Satoyama Initiative (COMDEKS)”⁷⁴, a project implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in collaboration with the Ministry of the Environment, supporting many small-scale projects promoted mainly by local communities in developing countries.

3.1.3 Progress in voluntary initiatives on business and human rights

When revising the *Charter of Corporate Behavior* in 2017, Keidanren added a provision to “conduct business that respects the human rights of all persons.” In 2021, they revised and enhanced the section on human rights in the *Implementation Guidance on Charter of Corporate Behavior*. In the same year, they also developed the *Handbook for Management That Respects Human Rights* as a practical guide to fulfill responsibility to respect human rights in accordance with the United Nations *Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights*. Through these initiatives and more, they have promoted member companies’ voluntary efforts.

As a result, the proportion of companies carrying out some kind of initiative based on the guiding principles of the United Nations more than doubled, from 36% in the previous survey (2020) to 76%. Looking at the results by employee size, 95% of companies with 5,000 or more employees are moving forward with the initiatives. In contrast, companies with 499 or fewer employees are more likely to

⁷³ Ministry of the Environment; Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries; Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry; and Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism

⁷⁴ An international project that aims to promote the SDGs and realize a society in harmony with nature. To achieve this, the project provides support based on Japan’s knowledge and experience in the field of biodiversity conservation in developing countries and supports efforts that promote the sustainable use of Satoyama and Satoumi.

report that they have not started the initiative or do not understand the content. Implementation in SMEs is a challenge⁷⁵.

3.1.4 Progress in information disclosure and promotion of impact assessments as a challenge

Regarding information disclosure on sustainability, many Japanese companies set KPIs for their own priority areas, measure progress while referring to global standards and indicators, and disclose information in integrated reports, sustainability reports, websites, etc. The number of companies that voluntarily publish integrated reports increased from 718 in 2021 to 1,019 in 2023⁷⁶.

In 2021, Keidanren published a report *Current Situation and Issues Regarding Measurement and Assessment of Measures to Address the SDGs*⁷⁷. It aims to help systematically organize evaluation methods, etc. and provide useful information for companies when they measure impacts of and manage their initiatives for the SDGs. In 2022, they published a set of recommendations titled *Using Impact Metrics to Promote Dialogue with Purpose as Starting Point*⁷⁸, outlining the significance and practical examples of impact assessment that can be used as a common language for diverse stakeholders.

Major future challenges in effectively utilizing impact assessment include establishing and promoting globally agreed common standards, as tried by UNDP in the “SDG Impact” initiative, regarding the development of appropriate indicators, assessment methods, and data infrastructure for progress management.

3.1.5 Evaluation and future of corporate initiatives

Companies are collaborating with diverse stakeholders to promote efforts aimed at achieving the SDGs utilizing technology and innovation, both domestically and internationally. By measuring and disclosing the progress of the efforts, they also drive improvements and utilize the information in dialogue with stakeholders. Companies are also making steady progress in efforts to address human rights, including gender equality which is often pointed out as a challenge in Japan.

Companies will continue their efforts to implement technological and other innovations in society and promote further collaboration with stakeholders, thereby striving to expand and strengthen their impact

⁷⁵From September to October 2021, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry conducted a survey mainly targeting companies listed on the first and second sections of the Tokyo Stock Exchange (n=approximately 2,800). Of the responding companies (n=760), about 70% have formulated human rights policies based on the United Nations *Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights*, and over 50% implement human rights due diligence. About 50% of the total have established guidelines and procedures to provide remedy to victims and to correct problems, of which over 90% have established internal reporting systems.

⁷⁶ <https://www.dirri.co.jp/res/report/uploads/2024/02/43defe0a0ba3215455b53fbbb84af45c0c0031e2.pdf> (in Japanese)

⁷⁷ <https://www.keidanren.or.jp/policy/2021/055.html> (in Japanese)

⁷⁸ https://www.keidanren.or.jp/en/policy/2022/060_summary.pdf (in Japanese)

on society. At the same time, they will promote impact assessments and disclose the results of their efforts in a more transparent manner.

3.2 The efforts of SMEs

3.2.1 Awareness rate of the SDGs is 90.5%

According to the *Survey on the SDGs at Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (2024)*, awareness of the SDGs is extremely high among SMEs, at 90.5%, showing a steady improvement in their awareness of the SDGs. Also, the percentage of companies with positive attitudes is increasing year by year to 34.6%, including those already working on the SDGs (17%) and those planning to work on them in the future (17.6%).

3.2.2 Challenges in promoting initiatives for the SDGs

Challenges include not knowing the benefit of working on the SDGs (16.8%), not knowing where to start (16.3%), and not having sufficient funding (14.9%).⁷⁹

Being tight on time, personnel, and funds, many SMEs are particularly interested in themes that can be easily linked to their profit increase and corporate growth, such as Goals 7 and 8. Meanwhile they tend not to be as interested in the themes that they feel is not directly linked to their profits, such as poverty, human rights issues, hunger, and gender equality.⁸⁰

These trends suggest that an effective approach for SMEs is to further highlight the SDGs as a growth strategy that will break the economic stagnation over the last 30 years and contribute to economic and cultural development, while also raising awareness of human rights and poverty issues.

[Case] SMEs' initiatives for GX, decarbonization, and carbon neutrality

Sustainable circular economy (Goal 12), biodiversity, and nature conservation (Goals 14 and 15)

(1) Initiatives by chambers of commerce and industry

The Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Nissho) collaborates with 515 chambers of commerce and industry across Japan to provide support through management consultations, etc. for decarbonization and carbon neutrality of SMEs nationwide. In 2022, they established the Working

⁷⁹ Source: Organization for Small & Medium Enterprises and Regional Innovation, JAPAN. *Survey on the Promotion of SDGs by Small and Medium Enterprises (2024) Report*.

⁸⁰ Organization for Small & Medium Enterprises and Regional Innovation, JAPAN. *Survey on the Promotion of SDGs by Small and Medium Enterprises (2024) Report*.

Group for SME Carbon Neutrality Promotion to strengthen support. According to a survey conducted by Nissho in collaboration with the Tokyo Chamber of Commerce and Industry in 2024, about 70% of SMEs are also implementing initiatives on decarbonization and carbon neutrality, mainly through energy conservation. Among reasons for and purposes of their efforts for decarbonization, the most common response was reducing utility and fuel costs (75.2%), followed by maintaining and improving their corporate reputation and presence (30.5%) and responding to changes in the business environment and technological innovation (25.6%). These results show that SMEs are also increasingly working to connect decarbonization and carbon neutrality to corporate branding and management innovation. Also, compared with companies not making decarbonization efforts, those engaging in such activities are significantly more likely to cite reasons such as maintaining and improving their corporate reputation and presence, responding to changes in the business environment and technological innovation, maintaining and expanding business transactions, and improving employee motivation.

These results suggest that decarbonization and carbon neutrality will become even more important themes also for the growth of SMEs. Yet, about 20% of SMEs report they do not know where to start. With the belief that the three steps consisting of learning, measuring, and reducing will be effective for decarbonization among SMEs, Nissho implements various measures to this end. For example, in the learning step, they introduce successful examples by SMEs and organize seminars. In the measuring step, they provide the CO₂ emissions check sheet free of charge on the Nissho website.

Representing the generation to lead the future, the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry Young Entrepreneurs Group (Japan YEG) published the *Sustainable Declaration* in FY 2021. It incorporates their multi-year commitment to setting an example as they drive transformation in such areas as realizing a sound material-cycle society, facilitating DX and GX, and fostering gender equality. In FY 2023, Japan YEG (consisting of 32,400 individual members from 417 primary groups in nine blocks across Japan as of April 2023) set the slogan “Contribution to a Sustainable and Spiritually Rich Future.” Based on this slogan, they carried out the following activities to achieve a sound material-cycle society and carbon neutrality, targeting the board and all the businesses, through leadership development and the use of the CO₂ check sheet recommended by Nissho.

- (1) Installing the Challenge 2030 awareness panel (visualizing estimated CO₂ reduction)
- (2) Implementing the 1510 Campaign, adapted from the 3010 campaign recommended by the Ministry of the Environment to reduce CO₂ emissions by reducing Food Loss and Waste
- (3) Using 99% recycled garbage bags

(4) Encouraging people to use their own water bottles (providing permanent water refill stations)

As a result of these initiatives, they reduced CO₂ emissions by approximately 4.294 tons in one year. They continue to create operation manuals and engage in activities that will foster the culture at the 417 primary groups across Japan.

3.2.3 Challenges and future directions of SMEs

SMEs face two main challenges: a lack of basic knowledge and shortages of know-how and human resources. In 2024, certifying systems for efforts throughout the supply chain were also launched, such as the “Sustainable Business Certification” (Japan Sustainable Business Association) which mainly targets SMEs⁸¹. From 2025 to 2030, efforts to develop a collaborative vision and commitment with large corporations are expected to progress, including undertaking initiatives across the entire supply chain in line with the principles of the Declaration of Partnership Building.

3.3 Finance

3.3.1 National finance

According to the preliminary results of the *Sustainable Investment Survey in Japan 2024*, released by the Japan Sustainable Investment Forum in December 2024, the total amount of sustainable investment in Japan exceeded 625 trillion yen, up 16.6% from the previous year. Discussions are also in progress to qualitatively and quantitatively expand sustainable finance. The Expert Panel on Sustainable Finance, launched by the Financial Services Agency in December 2020, has met 27 times by March 2025 and published four reports to date. Also, in December 2021, the Ministry of the Environment launched the Working Group on the Green List to create domestic guidelines on green bonds and loans⁸² and on sustainability-linked bonds and loans⁸³. Having concluded that domestic penetration through the guidelines had made some progress, since the 12th meeting in December 2024, the working group has been discussing issues and measures for the further development of the market.

Furthermore, awareness of impact investing, which is intended to create a positive social and environmental impact in parallel with financial returns, has increased, and efforts to implement it are progressing. In November 2021, the “Japan Impact-Driven Financing Initiative” was launched. It is a collaborative initiative by financial institutions that promote the practice of impact-driven investment. The impact investment balance at institutions supporting the initiative exceeded 10 trillion yen as of January 2024.

⁸¹ <https://sustainable-b.or.jp/> (in Japanese)

⁸² Bonds and loans that can only be used for green projects

⁸³ Bonds and loans that encourage borrowers to achieve ambitious sustainability performance targets, and the degree of improvement is linked to the terms of financing.

In the field of climate change, awareness of transition finance has increased internationally. This type of finance supports transition efforts aimed at steady decarbonization, including energy saving and fuel conversion, mainly in carbon-intensive industries. The practice of finance is also progressing. After the International Capital Market Association (ICMA)⁸⁴ published the *Climate Transition Finance Handbook* in December 2020, the Financial Services Agency, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, and the Ministry of the Environment formulated the *Basic Guidelines on Climate Transition Finance* in May 2021 to promote the practice in Japan. Furthermore, in order to show the specific direction of transition to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 in carbon-intensive industries, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry has formulated a roadmap for promoting transition finance for each industry. The Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism has formulated a roadmap for decarbonization in the shipping and aviation fields. The formation of finance utilizing these is progressing. The investment of over 150 trillion yen will be required over 10 years starting in FY 2023 to achieve carbon neutrality in Japan by 2050⁸⁵. As further expansion of transition finance is called for, the GX Acceleration Agency began operations in July 2024. Established with the aim of having a function to help cover risks that cannot be handled by the private sector, the agency promotes financial support across the public and private sectors.

From the perspective of funders, efforts are underway to further expand sustainable investment by individual investors. Sustainable investment is considered highly compatible with stable household asset formation from the viewpoint that it can lead to medium- to long-term corporate value creation. In order to expand sustainable investment, therefore, we need financial and economic education for individual investors as well as appropriate sustainable financial products targeting individual investors. While various financial institutions have worked on financial and economic education for years, the Japan Financial Literacy and Education Corporation (J-FLEC) was established in April 2024, resulting in the public and private sectors working together to promote financial and economic education. Regarding sustainable financial products for individuals, in order to enhance them, the Financial Services Agency's Expert Panel on Sustainable Finance has been discussing how to structure and provide financial products that are easy for individuals to understand, as well as issues requiring consideration in investor protection.

As described above, it is safe to conclude that not only has understanding of various financial methods aimed at achieving the SDGs deepened, but efforts aimed at implementing finance have progressed. In the future, in addition to accelerating the expansion of implementation, we will also need to focus on its results (outcomes), meaning how much it has helped solve social issues. To achieve this, it is critical that we construct the methods of measuring and managing outcomes. We therefore need to accumulate knowledge based on the practice of finance.

⁸⁴ ICMA: International Capital Market Association

⁸⁵ A statement by Prime Minister Kishida (then) at the 8th meeting of the Council of New Form of Capitalism Realization (May 2022)

[Case] Initiatives by the Japanese Bankers Association (JBA)

(1) Initiatives aimed at achieving carbon neutrality

The JBA formulated the *JBA Carbon Neutrality Initiative* in December 2021, focusing on the following five key priorities: (i) engagement, (ii) assessment, (iii) sustainable finance, (iv) climate-related disclosure, and (v) climate-related financial risks.

In addition to launching the JBA special website dedicated to climate change in December 2022, they also published several reference materials to support engagement between companies and member banks, including *First Steps Toward Decarbonization* in January 2023 and *CO₂ Visualization and Beyond* in February 2024.

Furthermore, they have also organized and hosted webinars roughly once a month, inviting relevant economic organizations, ministries, etc. to enhance member organizations' knowledge. As of December 2024, they have held 34 webinars.

(2) Initiatives to tackle poverty among children and young people

In December 2021, the JBA concluded an MOU with the Japan Securities Dealers Association (JSDA) for the purpose of helping resolve poverty among children and young people. Based on this agreement, they have been working collaboratively to address this issue.

In FY 2023, the JBA participated in a food drive campaign on a trial basis in collaboration with the National Food Bank Promotion Council. Having verified through this trial that the program is effective in reducing Food Loss and Waste and in increasing awareness of the SDGs, in FY 2024, they carried out a project for material support, expanding its target to the members of the JBA and the JSDA.

3.3.2 Regional finance

Efforts by regional finance have also progressed, including the delivery of diverse services that contribute to solving various issues in the region. These efforts aim to further infiltrate innovative local solutions related to SDGs promotion, improve the productivity of local industries and enterprises, and achieve sustainable growth of the regional economy.

Various actors play a role in regional finance, such as regional banks, regional banks II, credit associations, and credit cooperatives. They have developed a network of offices rooted in the regions, mainly developing services for SMEs and local residents in the regions. To achieve the SDGs, these regional financial institutions have played a major role in encouraging behavioral changes among SMEs, which account for over 99% of companies nationwide, and local residents as well. The following illustrates some specific initiatives.

- ① Providing guidance and support in formulating SDGs declarations, which summarize relationships

between local companies' business activities and the SDGs and set out efforts for closely related goals.


- ② Providing diagnostic services with established ESG and SDGs evaluation systems for SMEs, as well as financial products utilizing SDGs registration and certification systems implemented by municipalities.
- ③ Expanding the range of user companies for sustainable finance, such as positive impact finance⁸⁶ and sustainability-linked loans, by making it more accessible to SMEs. Examples include providing plans with reduced composition costs and constructing simple frameworks in collaboration with municipalities.

Regarding climate action, according to the report *Initiatives on Environmental and Climate Change Issues at Regional Banks* published by the Regional Banks Association of Japan in May 2024, the number of regional banks providing green finance was 54 as of October 2023, an increase by seven from the previous year. They also provide various non-financial support services, such as visualization of CO₂ emissions, introduction of companies that sell solar equipment and renewable energy, and consultation in setting goals and taking measures to reduce CO₂ emissions. Some financial institutions have also established their own energy business companies to promote renewable energy in the regions, aiming to revitalize regional economies.

Furthermore, there has been progress in efforts by financial institutions to promote region-wide decarbonization in collaboration with local governments. In addition to jointly proposing Decarbonization Leading Areas with the Ministry of the Environment and participating in the ministry's "Model Project for Constructing Regionwide Support Systems for Decarbonizing Business," some financial institutions within their regions have also jointly participate in the launch of regional decarbonization consortiums. The standpoint of regional finance has therefore changed drastically, from the conventional role as funders to co-creators of sustainable local communities.

As for sustainability of local communities, there are concerns about community decline associated with a falling birthrate, aging population, and population decline due to the concentration of people in the capital region, posing a major challenge in achieving the sustainable growth of regional economies. In particular, worker shortages in local companies are serious. Therefore, in addition to support in financing, regional financial institutions have expanded services for local companies, including support in founding and starting new businesses, introduction of management personnel, and support for business succession, as well as IT consultation that will help improve productivity through digitalization. Financial institutions also co-host business meetings such as the Regional Bank Food Selection, Food Appeal Discovery Business Meeting, Good Job Creation Fair, and Shinkumi Food

⁸⁶ A financing method that aims to help increase positive impacts and reduce negative impacts of fundraisers. This is achieved by providing funds based on comprehensive analysis and evaluation of impacts (positive and negative) that corporate activities have on the environment, society, and economy.



Business Matching Exhibition, thereby continuously helping expand the sales channels of local products. Furthermore, there has been a gradual growth in the number of regional financial institutions that establish regional trading companies, which strive to develop domestic and international sales channels for local products and to support the development and branding of new products. Such efforts have expanded their role for regional revitalization beyond finance. The question is whether these efforts can be turned into sustainable business models so that they can continue to be effective in the future.

3.4 Labor unions

As bearers of social dialogue, labor unions, together with employers, are expected to make important contributions to (i) the realization of decent work, (ii) respect for human rights throughout the supply chain from a business and human rights perspective, and (iii) building a sustainable economy and society. They will do so through national and international efforts that range from ensuring fair wages and other labor conditions through collective employer-employee relations (i.e., constructive employer-employee relations) to the establishment of workers' rights, human rights, environment, safety, peace, and others. This section describes their role in business. Refer to the next chapter for labor unions in a broader sense as civil society.

Contributions expected from labor unions include realizing decent work, respecting human rights throughout the supply chain from the viewpoint of business and human rights, and building a sustainable economy and society.

Although the prompt ratification of the ILO core labor standards is essential for realizing decent work, Japan has not ratified the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention (No. 111) and the Occupational Safety and Health Convention (No. 155). Rengo has been working to achieve prompt ratification by lobbying the Japanese government in collaboration with such bodies as the Parliamentarian Group for the Promotion of ILO Activities, as well as engaging in joint dialogues with civil society regarding the Japan-EU Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA).

Regarding business and human rights, Rengo formulated *JTUC-Rengo's Views on Business and Human Rights* in August 2023, showing its basic views and specific responses of Rengo as a whole. Based on this document, Rengo organizes activities and workshops on business and human rights issues in spring wage negotiations.

As for the development of a sustainable economy and society, GX needs to further advance in order to tackle the urgent challenge of climate change. In this process, just transition needs to be ensured so as to minimize negative impacts on society and the economy, such as employment. On occasions such as the GX Implementation Council meetings, Rengo has been calling for the implementation of measures such as social dialogue among relevant parties, including governments, employers, and workers, to discuss specific measures to realize just transition.

C-2 Trends in civil society

4.1 The COVID-19 pandemic, post-pandemic, and initiatives by civil society

4.1.1 The COVID-19 pandemic, post-pandemic, and the SDGs

Looking back on the past few years, we cannot ignore the COVID-19 pandemic. During the pandemic, Japanese society also saw an increasing number of people experiencing income loss and job loss. Moreover, all data indicate that the situations have worsened with vulnerable people, such as the increasing number of suicides (especially those aged 18 or younger) as well as growing cases of domestic violence and child abuse.

The Dormant Deposit Utilization Project launched the "Emergency Support Project for COVID-19" in fiscal year 2020 to address the increased support needs. Through this project, 773 projects (cumulative) were implemented, including support single-parent households and individuals who lost their jobs due to the pandemic, and delivered significant results. Starting in fiscal year 2025, the project expands its grant coverage under an "Emergency Framework" for a year to accurately respond and provide rapid focused support for urgent social issues.


Price hikes since the latter half of 2021 have also caused serious damage, particularly to people working in unstable employment and those with low income. In such a social environment, various private sectors and civil society have shown a significant capacity to address a broad range of social issues. One example is the "children's cafeterias," community activities to support children in difficult situations, which now number around 10,000, across the country, surpassing the number of junior high schools in Japan.

Private support organizations also play a major role in 24/7 telephone and online counseling and support for suicide prevention and mental health.

Japanese civil society has long worked to achieve Universal Health Coverage (UHC), which leaves no one behind, by connecting people facing barriers to access, particularly those in marginalized groups and communities to the medical care. Over the years, patients and people affected by diseases have built mutual support networks and nurtured a sense of empowerment based on shared lived experiences. They have also actively contributed to policy advocacy aimed at lowering treatment cost and improving the quality of care, yielding significant results.

4.1.2 International cooperation by Japan's civil society

Japan's civil society has been engaged on international cooperation in various fields, such as education, health, rural development, disaster prevention, and emergency humanitarian assistance in the Global South countries. There are over 400 civil society organizations engaging in international cooperation. As of 2020, the expenses these organizations have spent on projects etc. in developing countries



amount to over 50 billion yen (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Japan NGO Center for International Cooperation [JANIC]. *Data Book on NGOs in Japan 2021*). Of these, it is estimated that financial contributions from public institutions such as the government and JICA account for about 20%; the rest comes from voluntary financial resources of each organization and contributions from individuals, companies, and private foundations. These organizations are also actively engaged in policy advocacy related to multilateral development and humanitarian frameworks, and continue to contribute civil society coordination, including participation in the Major Groups and Other Stakeholders (MGOS) around sustainable development.

4.1.3 Expanding public-private collaboration and cooperation

In Japanese society, a recent policy trend in the field of support is public-private collaboration and cooperation. For various complicated and serious problems and social issues that cannot be handled by administrative agencies alone, what is becoming the standard practice is for administrative agencies and private organizations, including civil society, to collaborate and cooperate, aiming to resolve them together. This may have some relations to the spread of the SDGs philosophy.

For example, the Act on Promotion of Food Loss and Waste reduction, enacted in 2019, mentions the SDGs in the preamble. Also, the philosophy of leaving no one behind has been shown in various Japanese national strategies, such as the Basic Policy in the past few years in the context of realizing an inclusive society. In community welfare and suicide countermeasures, that philosophy is also set forth in the Act on the Advancement of Measures to Address Loneliness and Isolation, enacted in 2023, and public-private collaboration and cooperation is gradually developing as a method of realizing it.

Meanwhile, it should also be noted that this trend is criticized by civil society. While advocating public-private collaboration and cooperation, they argue that it is the mobilization of civil society to address social issues. There is no denying the aspect of leaving all the work to civic activities with low commission fees, etc. within a limited budget or institutional framework. Also, aiming to reduce social security expenses and public support on the premise of helping each other in the community, such as mutual aid, completely defeats the purpose.

4.1.4 Challenge: the need for scientific evaluation and a roadmap to achievement

In the work to achieve the SDGs, the Japanese government needs to scientifically evaluate its progress and draw a road map to achieving the goals. For example, the government says there is currently no data that can be provided regarding 1.2.1 and 1.2.2 of the SDG global indicators on poverty. Despite existing data, such as the relative poverty rate calculated in the *Comprehensive Survey of Living Conditions* by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare and the *National Survey of Family Income, Consumption and Wealth* by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, they are not using it as an indicator, which also means the neglect of accountability for the goal of halving poverty.

Thus, looking at trends over the past few years, collaboration and cooperation with civil society is progressing little by little on various domestic social issues. At the same time, it is necessary to scientifically verify whether these efforts are conducted in a way that leaves no one behind as well as to improve the efforts.

4.2 Consumers

Regarding consumers' role, mainly from the perspective of Goal 12 “responsible consumption and production,” the *SDGs Implementation Guiding Principles* (revised in 2023) stresses the importance of promoting awareness-raising and the creation of economic and social mechanisms, in addition to the realization of sound markets. This can be achieved by engaging in sustainable consumption activities contributing to the transition to a circular economy through purchasing products and using services that have low environmental impact, such as ethical consumption and Food Loss and Waste reduction. Goal 12 is becoming even more important as of 2025 in light of global warming, resource depletion, environmental issues such as waste, impacts on human rights and poverty, and changes in corporate social responsibility.

4.2.1 Initiatives for resource saving and circular economy

Consumers Japan, prefectural consumer groups, and others collaborate and cooperate with administrative organizations and regional groups to steadily promote activities for resource saving and resource recycling. Specifically, they are working on saving energy such as electricity and water, implementing the “Cool Biz” and the “Warm Biz” campaigns, using energy-saving products such as switching to LED lights, reducing waste through thorough sorting, selecting products with simple packaging, passing products to next owners instead of throwing them away by using thrift stores and flea market apps, bringing their own shopping bags and water bottles, and changing the way they use convenient and inexpensive plastic products such as plastic shopping bags and PET bottles. Furthermore, since 2023, a civil movement centered on decarbonization “Decokatsu”⁸⁷ has been spreading on a national scale.

4.2.2 Initiatives for ethical consumption

According to the *Survey on Attitude and Awareness in Consumer Life*⁸⁸ conducted in October 2024, 27.4% of the respondents were aware of ethical consumption, with relatively high levels of awareness among those in their teens and 40s. Also, 36.1% of the respondents reported that they were taking action leading to ethical consumption. As for reasons for taking action, the most common response

⁸⁷ <https://ondankataisaku.env.go.jp/dekokatsu/>

⁸⁸ https://www.caa.go.jp/notice/assets/consumer_research_cms201_241107_01.pdf (in Japanese)

was wanting to choose items that could contribute to the environment or society if they were to purchase something similar (53.3%), followed by being economical (50.4%).

Those who reported not practicing ethical consumption were more likely to choose not knowing which products and services would lead to ethical consumption (23.0%) and not having enough money (20.1%). Looking closely by age group, those aged 60 and older were more likely than any other age groups to say they did not know which products and services would lead to ethical consumption and whether the products and services would really lead to ethical consumption.

4.2.3 Initiatives to reduce Food Loss and Waste and to promote food donation

In measures against food loss and Food Loss and Waste, efforts have made steady progress. Examples to reduce business related Food Loss and Waste include re-examining and disseminating the concept of the “best before date”, revising the long-established “one-third rule” in the food distribution sector, and cooperation with food banks which provide surplus food to people in need free of charge. In December 2024, the *Food Donation Guidelines: Toward Improving the Reliability of Food Donation* and the *Doggie Bag Promotion Guidelines: Toward Achieving the SDGs*⁸⁹ were published, providing guiding principles of measures to reduce Food Loss and Waste. In addition, the project named “Shoku No Wa” (meaning “FOOD CIRCLE”) was launched, enabling relevant ministries and agencies as well as local public bodies to work in an integrated manner rather than in silos to visualize overall resource saving and resource recycling efforts. This project aims to help promote consumer participation.

4.2.4 Initiatives for consumer-oriented management

Businesses need to win consumers’ support by illustrating the society they aim to realize through their main business. To this end, management that enhances social value by co-creating and cooperating with consumers, or consumer-oriented management, has been promoted to build a sustainable and desirable society. As of the end of January 2025, 827 businesses have announced the voluntary declaration of consumer-oriented management⁹⁰ and engage in follow-up activities every five years. Businesses, being in charge of responsible production, have been promoting various initiatives, such as designing products and services that prioritize environmental consideration, saving energy and minimizing waste in the manufacturing process, and reducing the impact on the social environment throughout the product supply chain. In response, consumers have been working to fulfill their role in responsible consumption by selecting sustainable products and services, carrying out recycling activities, and avoiding wasteful consumption. The SDGs in the consumer sector have significance in

⁸⁹ https://www.caa.go.jp/policies/policy/consumer_policy/information/food_loss/promote/#06 (in Japanese)

⁹⁰ https://www.caa.go.jp/policies/policy/consumer_partnerships/consumer_oriented_management/businesses/ (in Japanese)

steadily implementing them in daily life. It is hoped that further spread of consumer-oriented management and increased consumer awareness will generate synergies in achieving the SDGs.

4.2.5 Evaluation and challenges

The SDGs are the driving force for achieving sustainable development and prosperity in Japan. A growing number of people are aware that choices and purchases through consumption behavior can greatly influence its success and failure. Meanwhile, the following four challenges deserve attention as we have five years left until 2030.

(i) Opportunities are insufficient for people to see how their consumption behavior is reflected in the progress of Japan's SDGs and what effects they are producing. This may hinder momentum and enthusiasm for future activities.

(ii) Considering the current popularity of social media, it is difficult to determine the quality, accuracy, and reliability of a huge amount of information sent from various entities. Determining cases of greenwashing and SDG-washing is impossible, and it is desirable to explore a system to detect ungrounded arguments and concealed tradeoffs.


(iii) Regarding global issues such as climate change, peace, and human rights, many consumers think nothing will change through individual efforts because these issues are the responsibilities of the state, municipalities, and companies. It is essential for municipalities, businesses, NPOs and NGOs, educational institutions, media, and consumers to work collaboratively and cooperatively to fulfill the promise of leaving no one behind. To achieve this, now is the time to evaluate and analyze each SDG initiative from a partnership perspective, incorporate changes in the external environment, review and improve strategies, methods, etc. again, and put them into practice.

(iv) Although workshops on the SDGs had been frequently held across the country immediately after their adoption, there have been few since 2021. Consumers are expected to change their role, from recipients of protection to active players participating in the formation of a just and sustainable society in the market⁹¹. It is necessary to remind people that consumption behavior based on the idea of the SDGs can help business and social transformation.

4.3 Labor unions

Labor unions, being special stakeholders in corporate activities, are expected to continue their active efforts in encouraging employers and collaborating with other stakeholders to achieve the SDGs. In addition to Goal 8 (economic growth and employment), labor unions are also expected to contribute to achieving multiple goals such as Goal 1 (poverty), Goal 5 (gender), Goal 10 (inequality), Goal 13

⁹¹ Basic Act on Consumer Policies <https://laws.e-gov.go.jp/law/343AC1000000078/> (in Japanese)



(climate change), and Goal 16 (peace) through efforts aimed at securing an appropriate work environment and working conditions.

For example, since 2016, Rengo has included efforts to solve various issues related to the SDGs in its campaign policy. The organization has been promoting a labor movement based on sustainability, where the future continues to be filled with hope in the next generation, and inclusion that embraces mutual respect and leaves no one behind. Its specific course of action and policies are linked to relevant SDGs. In that sense, the labor movement is the SDGs themselves, and Rengo is interacting and cooperating not only with the government but also with various stakeholders such as businesses, civil society, and private entities engaging in public activities, to achieve the SDGs.

Also, with regard to Goal 16 (peace), Rengo carries out large-scale peace actions every year in Hiroshima, Nagasaki, etc., continually calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons and the realization of permanent world peace. In August 2024, the General Secretary of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) attended the peace rallies in Hiroshima and Nagasaki hosted by Rengo. The events were shared with the world in a timely manner on the ITUC website etc. Furthermore, Rengo makes requests every year to the embassies of countries possessing nuclear weapons in Japan for the abolition of nuclear weapons. The organization also holds photo panel exhibitions across the country, conveying the damage caused by nuclear weapons.

In collaborative work with civil society, Rengo positions the NGO-Labor Union International Cooperation Forum, which was established in 2004, as a place for NGOs and labor unions to address international social issues by utilizing their respective characteristics. Based on this platform, Rengo is promoting efforts to raise awareness among union members and the general public as well as to solve problems in cooperation with NGOs in order to achieve the SDGs. Also, as a management committee member of the Child Labour Network (CL-net) composed of labor unions and civil society organizations, they organize a campaign every June to promote understanding of child labor. The campaign includes awareness raising and policy recommendations through such programs as symposiums attended by relevant ministries, agencies, companies, NGOs, etc.

Target 8.7, ending all forms of child labor by 2025, is difficult to achieve. We are also seeing a rapid growth in factors that will cause more child labor, such as global conflicts, growing number of refugees, food crises, and the effects of climate change. Considering the impact of Japanese companies on the global economy, Japan also needs to fulfill its share of responsibilities. CL-Net proposes that Japan participate as a partner in Alliance 8.7, which is a global framework for achieving Target 8.7, and promote efforts to abolish child labor based on the United Nations *Business and Human Rights Guiding Principles*, including the development of laws on better transparency in corporate supply chains and on public procurement.

4.4 Cooperatives

4.4.1 Cooperatives and their initiatives to achieve the SDGs

According to the *ICA Statement on the Cooperative Identity* established by the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) in 1995, the 7th principle that should be used as a management guideline for cooperatives reads as follows.

7th Principle: Concern for Community

Cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies approved by their members.

This principle stipulates that cooperatives should contribute to the sustainable development of local communities. Many cooperative groups in Japan have accepted the statement and successively enacted basic policy documents based on it. Against this background, cooperatives in Japan have embraced the adoption of the 2030 agenda. By 2020, most individual cooperative groups had adopted their declarations and action policies to help achieve the SDGs.

As examples of progress since 2021, numerical targets have been set; action policies have been formulated by individual cooperatives and federations; learning activities have been organized for cooperative executives, employees, and members; and concrete practices have moved forward. Considering that 46.5% of Japanese adults (18 years and older) are members of at least one cooperative (according to the JCA survey mentioned later), changes in cooperative members' attitudes and behavior can potentially create a significant movement. According to the *National Attitudes Survey on Cooperatives 2022* (JCA), cooperative members' interest in each of the 17 Goals in the SDGs is higher than that of non-members, suggesting some positive effects of cooperatives' efforts.


Cooperatives contribute to the SDGs by solving social issues through business, by offering donations and subsidies that utilize surplus and management resources, and by taking other activities. Such contributions can also be seen in general enterprises. What is unique about cooperatives is engagement and participation by cooperative members with awareness. This is an action not generally seen among corporate customers and shareholders. Cooperatives' contributions to the SDGs and other issues are often realized through conscious engagement and participation of cooperative members in addition to innovative business models constructed by executives and employees.

The United Nations gave high praise to cooperatives and adopted a resolution at the General Assembly proclaiming 2025 as the second International Year of Cooperatives. The resolution invites all member states and other relevant stakeholders to promote cooperatives and raise awareness of their contribution to the SDGs and other issues.

However, not all cooperative members are active. For cooperatives, a constant challenge will be to enhance their businesses and activities through learning and close mutual communication among members, executives, and employees, thereby contributing to the SDGs and other issues.

4.4.2 Implementation of main initiatives by cooperatives since 2021

(1) Learning activities



Countless opportunities have been provided for cooperative members to learn about the SDGs. Lecture series and workshops have been held for members and others, and articles related to the SDGs have been published in monthly magazines for cooperative members. Some cooperatives also organized SDGs contests focusing on member organizations' practices. Ultimately, the source of cooperative activities is members' understanding and participation. The following practices started with these learning activities.

(2) Agriculture, forestry, and fisheries

The JA Group decided on the *Action Policy for Environmentally Friendly Agriculture* in 2024, focusing on reducing chemical fertilizers and chemical pesticides, and reducing greenhouse gases and plastics associated with agricultural production. As concrete measures, for example, they have reused food and fishery waste in feed and fertilizer, expanded the use of compost by providing mixed fertilizer containing compost and through other measures, presented “green menus” (systematic proposals) for farmers to reduce environmental load, and decided on a policy to prevent plastic coating of slow-release fertilizers from being discharged to ocean (aiming for zero plastic-coated fertilizer use by 2030). Agriculture-welfare collaboration is also promoted, connecting welfare facilities for people with disabilities to agricultural production sites to provide farming opportunities for people with disabilities.

To protect and improve fishing grounds, which serve as the foundation of fishery management, the JF Group responds to changes in the marine environment by creating Satoumi, conserving seaweed beds and tidal flats, implementing community based fisheries management, and through other efforts.

In the forestry sector, practices include forest maintenance by forestry cooperatives as well as the creation and sale of J-credits based on this premise.

(3) Finance and mutual aid

Practices by cooperative financial institutions include ESG investment in bonds and others for the purpose of climate change countermeasures, financial inclusion, and financial education.

Against the backdrop of frequent natural disasters, they have organized “disaster prevention cafes” (places for fun learning) over 550 times, signed comprehensive partnership agreements with local governments, and hosted events on the themes of disaster prevention and mitigation.

(4) Subsidy system

Using their members' participation (contributions) etc. as funding sources, many cooperatives provide measures against child poverty, academic support, grants to children's cafeterias and NPOs, support for disaster victims, donations to UNICEF, and many other services on a continuous and daily basis.

(5) Practices by consumer cooperatives

Among cooperative groups, consumer cooperatives are the most systematic promoters of environmental and sustainability policies. In 2021, Japanese Consumers' Co-operative Union (JCCU) formulated the *Consumer Co-op 2030 Environmental Sustainability Policy*. Aiming for 2030, they set

numerical targets for the consumer cooperative group as a whole on reducing CO₂ emissions, reducing food waste, reducing the use of disposable plastic containers and packaging, renewable energy capacity, and reducing the use of paper for product catalogs. They also report their progress every fiscal year, receive evaluation and advice from the evaluation committee they have established, consisting of external experts, and incorporate the results in future actions. For cooperatives, there is no top-down approach by a national organization. To achieve the targets, cooperative members' understanding is also essential. In addition to the effects of practices themselves, the great significance lies in the fact that many cooperative members, executives, and employees learn, understand the importance, and then put it into practice on their own.

4.4.3 Evaluation of progress in cooperatives' efforts for the SDGs

In November 2023, JCCU expressed the following opinions on the revised *SDGs Implementation Guiding Principles*.

- (i) Achievement of the SDGs is in jeopardy amid climate change, infectious diseases, and frequent conflicts. The Japanese government is expected to demonstrate leadership.
- (ii) Peace is essential for achieving the SDGs. It should therefore be more prioritized so that the overall tone of the *Guiding Principles* is based on integrated efforts to promote peacekeeping and sustainable development.
- (iii) Japan is reported to face challenges in Goal 5 (gender) and Goal 10 (inequality). Realizing an inclusive society should be clearly stated as a goal to be achieved by Japanese society as a whole.
- (iv) The broader introduction of renewable energy should be clearly stated in order to avoid the climate crisis.
- (v) The path towards achieving the SDGs should be visualized and made easy to understand so that civil society and consumers can participate.
- (vi) Collaboration between local stakeholders, including cooperatives, and governments as well as government support should be strengthened.

C-3 Trends in research and educational institutions

5.1 Research institutions

Progress in science, technology, and innovation (STI), which are essential for achieving the SDGs, is supported by the activities of many research institutions. Science, technology, and innovation themselves can play a major role as means to achieve the SDGs. But Japanese research institutions' activities and their scientific results are also expected to make a contribution, both domestically and internationally, in understanding the current state of the world throughs earth observation and more,

as a basis for target setting, in analyzing relationships between targets, in evaluating achievements, and in discussing post-2030 agenda. Many researchers from Japan have contributed to the preparation of reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). Additionally, Japanese individuals participated as authors in the United Nations Global Sustainable Development Report 2023.

Research institutions are expected to help the dramatic transformation of STI based on scientific evidence. In addition to advanced technology, they are also called on to participate in the innovation of regional management to connect existing technology and local knowledge⁹². It should be noted that although innovation and transformation are key to achieving goals, they should be treated as a broader concept that includes social aspects, rather than focusing solely on technical aspects. Sharing visions and information between civil society, businesses, governments, and scientists is necessary also to recognize roles that science, technology, and innovation can play as means to achieve the SDGs, and to raise awareness of various issues and their urgency. Moreover, it is essential that the scientific community collaborate and cooperate with a wide range of other stakeholders to further promote the SDGs and achieve planetary health under international initiatives such as Future Earth. The following outlines examples regarding progress in these areas.

[Case 1] Initiatives by the Science Council of Japan

The Science Council of Japan has published a list summarizing recommendations issued since October 1, 2014, and how academic forums held since October 1, 2020, are connected to the SDGs⁹³. They used machine learning technology to characterize their 285 proposals and automatically cluster them. The results showed that the proposals were almost evenly distributed across the SDGs. There are also results numerically showing that the proposals of the Science Council of Japan cover issues in a wider range of fields, even in comparison with the classification results of the 100 items described in the *5th Science and Technology Basic Plan*. Furthermore, the Liaison Conference on Carbon Neutrality (Net Zero) was established in June 2021. It comprises the representatives of committees, subcommittees, etc. that discuss carbon neutrality, and the results of their deliberation are widely disseminated to society⁹⁴.

[Case 2] Program by JST to construct an industry-academia-government co-creation system

⁹² Japan Science and Technology Agency. *Practices of Science and Technology Innovation to Achieve SDGs*, 2021, p16. (in Japanese)

⁹³ Science Council of Japan. “Relationships with the SDGs—Activities of the Science Council of Japan: Focusing on Recommendations.” In SCJ from the SDG Perspective—Building Relationships Between Society and Science. <https://www.scj.go.jp/ja/scj/sdgs/index.html> (in Japanese)

⁹⁴ Science Council of Japan. Liaison Conference on Carbon Neutrality (Net Zero): The List of Members, Deliberation Details etc. (as of May 1, 2022), https://www.scj.go.jp/ja/member/iinkai/carbon_n/kousei.html (in Japanese)

The Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST) has been implementing the “Program on Open Innovation Platform for Industry-Academia Co-creation”⁹⁵ since 2020. This program sets forth a vision of the desired future society based on the SDGs and promotes "research and development that contributes to innovation through backcasting" alongside the establishment of a "self-sustaining and sustainable industry-academia-government co-creation system." By leveraging the strengths of universities and regional characteristics, it aims to foster the formation of co-creation hubs among industry, academia, and government, thereby contributing to national growth and regional revitalization. As of January 2025, 45 hubs led by research institutions are underway. Additionally, JST has conducted the "STI for SDGs Award"⁹⁶ six times, showcasing the potential contributions of science and technology to achieving the SDGs.

[Case 3] Future Earth: its activities and integrated report

Future Earth⁹⁷, an international scientific network for a sustainable society, has established a committee called the Earth Commission to advise on local to global policy-making for achieving the SDGs based on scientific knowledge, ensuring that the effects of policies remain within the boundaries of Earth's systems. Experts from Japan have participated as members. Furthermore, at the annual United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP), Future Earth publishes an integrated policy report conveying the latest scientific knowledge on the global environment, including climate science, in an easy-to-understand manner. Within Japan, research institutions also work together with private companies and students to translate reports and organize explanatory events, promoting activities to widely disseminate information.

As shown in these cases, while collaboration beyond the field of science, partnership with society, and international scientific cooperation are making progress, there is a need for greater participation by research institutions in the scientific assessment of achieving the SDGs and evaluating synergies and trade-offs. Additionally, the role that science plays in policy decisions on the SDGs by national and local governments is not necessarily sufficient, with the exception of activities such as councils, etc., and it is not sufficiently recognized by the citizens. Furthermore, a system is underdeveloped in evaluating research institutions' contribution to the SDGs to date. Promoting collaboration with international research and educational institutions such as SDSN Japan will also become increasingly necessary. In the future, activities will need to be transformed based on these evaluations.

5.2 Educational institutions

As for educational institutions, following the formulation of the Second ESD Implementation Plan in Japan in May 2021, the *Guide to Promoting Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)* and the *ASPnet*⁹⁸ *Schools Guidebook* were revised in May 2021. Also, in the *4th Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education*, decided by the Cabinet in June 2023, promotion of ESD is set as a basic policy relating

⁹⁵ <https://www.jst.go.jp/pf/platform/index.html> (in Japanese)

⁹⁶ <https://www.jst.go.jp/ristex/sdgs-award/> (in Japanese)

⁹⁷ <https://futureearth.org/>, <https://futureearth.org/initiatives/earth-targets-initiatives/earth-commission/>, <https://futureearth.org/publications/science-insights/>

⁹⁸ UNESCO Associated Schools Network

to future education policies. In the goals and basic measures of the education policy for the next five years, it is also stated that creators of a sustainable society should be nurtured mainly at UNESCO Associated Schools, which are positioned as bases to promote ESD.

Based on the ESD for 2030 roadmap, the ESD-Net 2030 Global Meeting was held in Tokyo in December 2023, co-hosted by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology and UNESCO. It was attended by over 200 educators from about 80 countries who were implementing ESD initiatives. The event included a special session introducing practical examples of ESD at various schools in Japan and visits to UNESCO Associated Schools in the country, offering an opportunity to share ESD practices in Japan with the world.

Based on the *Constitution of UNESCO*, Japan submitted the *Recommendation on Education for Peace and Human Rights, International Understanding, Cooperation, Fundamental Freedoms, Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development*, adopted at the 42nd session of the UNESCO General Conference in November 2023, to the National Diet in November 2024. In addition to preparing the Recommendation's provisional translation in Japanese and posting it on the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology(MEXT)'s website, the MEXT disseminated it to relevant organizations such as boards of education and higher education institutions.

UNESCO organizes the “UNESCO-Japan Prize on Education for Sustainable Development,” with the support of the Japanese government, for the purpose of motivating ESD practitioners around the world to challenge themselves to improve efforts and spreading excellent initiatives around the world. Kanazawa University, nominated by Japan, was selected as one of the winning institutions in 2023. The award ceremony was held at UNESCO's General Conference in November of the same year.



Scenes of Kanazawa University being awarded a prize (Photo: Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology)

In Japan, the number of UNESCO Associated Schools, positioned as bases to promote ESD, has increased to over 1,000.

The National Conference for the UNESCO Associated Schools Network is held every year, where individuals and stakeholders affiliated with UNESCO Associated Schools in Japan gather to share and exchange good practices. In FY 2024, the event was held combining in-person and online formats,

attended by over 300 teachers, staff members, and those involved in UNESCO activities from across the country.



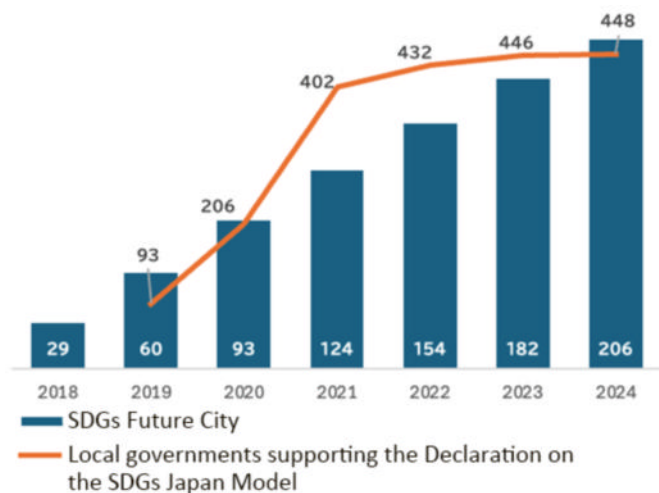
UNESCO National Convention
(Photo: Ministry of Education,
Culture, Sports, Science and
Technology)

C-4 TRENDS IN LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

6.1 Spreading and Advancing the SDGs in Local Communities

The concept of the SDGs has become widely recognized at the local level, and local and regional governments are working to address their respective challenges by taking into account the SDGs, which is a distinctive feature of Japan's implementation and promotion of the SDGs. As of 2023, the percentage of municipalities working on the SDGs has steadily increased from 52.1% in 2021 to 65.6% in 2022⁹⁹. By 2024, 206 municipalities have been selected as SDGs Future Cities. The number of municipalities supporting the *Declaration on the SDGs Japan Model*, published in January 2019, was initially 93 but has increased to 448 (43 prefectural governments and 405 local municipalities) as of March 2024¹⁰⁰.


Local regions face complex and intertwined challenges stemming from population decline and the contraction of regional economies. Prefectural governments are expected to address administrative issues on a broader scale, while municipal governments need to address challenges more closely aligned with residents' lives and unique local circumstances. The issues vary depending on the size of the



Materials: The number of SDGs Future Cities was prepared based on data by the Cabinet Office, and the number of local governments supporting the *Declaration on the SDGs Japan Model* was prepared based on documents by supporting local governments.

⁹⁹ Cabinet Office. *FY 2023 National Survey on the SDGs*. (November 2023)

¹⁰⁰ <https://www.pref.kanagawa.jp/documents/55062/5463298.pdf> (in Japanese)



local and regional governments. Local governments are advancing efforts to build a society where "no one is left behind" by addressing these diverse challenges and residents' needs. In the process of creating such sustainable local communities, the concept of the SDGs is being integrated into their initiatives, with efforts made to reflect it in projects they implement and to ensure that more residents understand it. To achieve this, it is important not only for local governments but also for stakeholders active in the region, including local residents, to collaborate and work together to co-create a sustainable society.

6.2 Establishing systems to promote the SDGs in local governments

In order to incorporate the SDGs in the policies and projects of local governments and to mainstream them, it is necessary to develop mechanisms and systems for SDGs promotion. A growing number of municipalities have also established cross-sectional SDGs promotion headquarters and formulated ordinances, guidelines, and plans related to SDGs promotion. Since 2021, Shimotsuma City in Ibaraki Prefecture, Kyotango City in Kyoto Prefecture, Myoko City in Niigata Prefecture, Noboribetsu City in Hokkaido, and others have formulated ordinances related to SDGs promotion. Okinawa Prefecture, Nirasaki City in Yamanashi Prefecture, Fujisawa City in Kanagawa Prefecture, etc. have formulated guidelines and plans. In March 2023, Sado City in Niigata Prefecture enacted the *Sado City Ordinance for the Promotion of Sustainable Island Development Through the Creation of a Circulating and Ecological Sphere (CES)*, aiming to advance concrete visions and initiatives on the SDGs in the region. Furthermore, an increasing number of municipalities are working to mainstream the SDGs in their comprehensive plans, comprehensive strategies, and budgeting. For example, Kawasaki City in Kanagawa Prefecture has clarified the alignment between the *Phase 3 Implementation Plan of the Kawasaki City Comprehensive Plan* (formulated in March 2022) and the SDGs, and states that it integrates the progress management of policies and projects under the *Comprehensive Plan* with the management of SDG promotion. Koriyama City, Fukushima Prefecture, has developed its budget using backcasting approach, based on the basic principles of the SDGs.

6.3 Developing partnerships to spread and advance the SDGs in local areas

In addition to collaboration with local stakeholders through the construction of collaborative bases, registration and certification systems for the SDGs, etc., initiatives in broader areas are also progressing and deepening through multi-stakeholder platforms that transcend the boundaries of local governments. For example, the Kansai SDGs Platform (KSP) – which consists of diverse actors such as private companies, civil society, NPOs, NGOs, universities, research institutions, local governments, national government agencies, etc. in the Kansai region– has led efforts aimed at raising awareness of the SDGs in the region. The platform has over 3,100 members as of February 2025. One of KSP's distinguishing features is nine specialized subcommittees (Kansai SDG Contribution Business Network, SDGs Environmental Business, Co-Education, Zero Food Waste, SDGs Knowledge Lab,

Barrier-Free Maps, Academic Commons, Hyogo SDGs Hub, and Local SDGs/Decarbonization), each carrying out unique activities leveraging their respective expertise. In 2024, an inter-subcommittee exchange meeting was held, facilitating broader networking and collaboration through interaction and information exchange among subcommittees, as well as with members not belonging to subcommittees. The meeting has also helped generate new ideas and fostered initiatives aimed at achieving the SDGs. Such regional platforms have also been built in the Chubu and Kyushu regions. In addition, organizations such as the Noto SDGs Lab (located in Suzu City, Ishikawa Prefecture), the Yokohama SDGs Design Center (located in Yokohama City, Kanagawa Prefecture), and the Nishiawakura Whole Village Research Institute (located in Nishiawakura Village, Okayama Prefecture) are playing a crucial role in advancing efforts to achieve the SDGs at the local level. These organizations possess intermediary support functions that foster and strengthen partnerships with diverse stakeholders, including municipalities, businesses, and citizen groups. They coordinate, support, and implement collaborations and projects aimed at solving regional challenges.



The KSP subcommittee exchange meeting (May 29, 2024 at the Osaka University Nakanoshima Center)

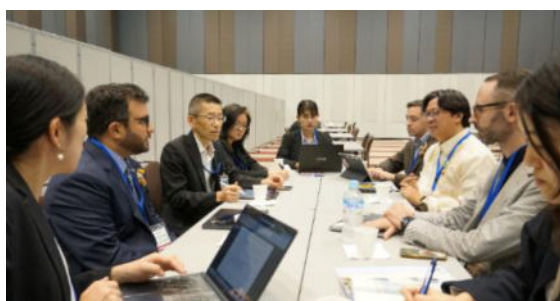
6.4 Voluntary Local Review (VLR)

Follow-up and review of the progress of the SDGs and the use of those insights to further strengthen implementation is a key element in promoting the SDGs. Voluntary Local Review (VLR) has been spreading globally as one of the methods of conducting and publicly sharing such follow-up and review. Shimokawa Town in Hokkaido, Toyama City in Toyama Prefecture, and Kitakyushu City in Fukuoka Prefecture published VLRs, along with New York City, at the United Nations High Level Political Forum (HLPF) in 2018, making a starting point for global movement of the VLRs. Later, VLRs were conducted in 2019 by Hamamatsu City in Shizuoka Prefecture, in 2021 by Tokyo Metropolitan Government and Yokohama City in Kanagawa Prefecture, in 2022 by Toyota City in Aichi Prefecture jointly with the United Nations Centre for Regional Development (UNCRD), in 2023 by Tokyo, and in 2024 by Sado City in Niigata Prefecture. These VLRs are also disseminated internationally through HLPF and other channels.

Notably, the Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) prepared by Tokyo in 2021 and 2023 have been structured in a "future-oriented" manner. They not only review the current situation but also link with

the comprehensive plan to outline a vision for the future and the policies aimed at achieving it. In 2024, Tokyo was the only municipality in the world to host a side event at the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), where they discussed efforts to enhance awareness of the SDGs and shared their VLRs on an international platform.

Based on the experience in conducting a VLR, Yokohama City in Kanagawa Prefecture has been contributing to the promotion of the SDGs at an international level. In collaboration with other organizations, such as CityNet and the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES), the city shared knowledge through accepting visitors from overseas and training programs, such as the Asia-Pacific Mayors Academy for Sustainable Urban Development hosted by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and others. Yokohama City also supported the implementation of VLRs in Santa Rosa, Baguio, and San Fernando in the Philippines.



Discussing the VLR within Santa Rosa City(Photo: Yokohama City, Kanagawa Prefecture)

With support from the government, including SDGs Future Cities, Japan has made notable progress in efforts to promote the SDGs by local governments in collaboration with regional stakeholders, especially companies. In this regard, further joint efforts by national and local entities are required. Meanwhile, it is important to go beyond merely linking the SDGs to policies and projects. Efforts are needed to further deepen each initiative. Specifically, enhancing synergies between different policy areas based on the SDGs principles to implement efficient and effective measures, and creating mechanisms to further deepen collaboration with various stakeholders such as businesses, civil society organizations, and individual residents, are crucial for autonomous and sustainable regional development. In this context, remaining challenges include strengthening coordination functions between departments, improving employees' understanding of the SDGs, and promoting a follow-up system based on specific indicators to properly grasp regional issues. In this regard, it is also necessary to advance the VLRs, which primarily target local government efforts, by incorporating a more collaborative, stakeholder-engaged approach inspired by integrated corporate reporting, thereby strengthening it as a tool for regional revitalization and sustainable community building. It is also important to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs by sharing and expanding the diverse and abundant examples of local initiatives accumulated in Japan, not only domestically but internationally as well. In particular, international cooperation and collaboration through the know-how gained from Japan's early adoption of VLRs and the SDGs Future Cities Program can help strengthen initiatives for the SDGs in partner cities and regions. Such exchanges can generate additional benefits, such as strengthening the capacity of local governments in Japan, and mutual learning and deepening understanding by involving local stakeholders in the process.

C-5 Parliament


As acknowledged in the 2030 Agenda, parliaments can play an integral role from the perspective of effective implementation and accountability. In order to realize a society where no one is left behind in Japan, the Diet and local assemblies are expected to listen to the voices of citizens from all over Japan so that their interests and concerns are reflected in national and local government policies. Moreover, parliamentarians are expected to cooperate with administrative agencies, civil society, and international organizations to propose concrete policy options to solve economic and social issues at both national and regional levels.

The Liberal Democratic Party's parliamentary league on SDGs diplomacy, which was established in April 2017, exchanged opinions when revising the *Implementation Guiding Principles* in 2023. They pointed out the need to mention the impact of wars on achieving the SDGs across the world and that peace is the foundation of everything.

The Komeito Party's SDGs Promotion Committee, established in January 2016, was upgraded to the "Komeito SDGs Promotion Headquarters" in December 2020. It has been working to strengthen initiatives at both the national and local government levels in collaboration with local councilors. In preparation for the 2023 revision of the *Implementation Guiding Principles*, the party asked questions about efforts to the Prime Minister, the head of the national SDGs Promotion Headquarters, at the House of Representatives plenary session in the extraordinary Diet session in October 2023. They also exchanged opinions with the SDGs Civil Society Network and others in November of the same year. These are a few examples of the party's active engagement in discussion. In December of the same year, they directly delivered the *Proposals for the Revision of the SDGs Implementation Guiding Principles* to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, stressing that the Japanese government should lead the international community to achieve the SDGs and drastically accelerate domestic and international efforts.

The Japan Parliamentarians Federation for Population (JPFP) is a cross-party parliamentary league with a very long history, established in 1974. The main objective of JPFP's activities is to contribute to the realization of sustainable development by deepening international understanding of population issues and making concrete recommendations to national policies. JPFP emphasizes that population issues are closely related to fields such as poverty, education, health, women's empowerment, and the environment, and has been promoting international cooperation to address these challenges. Notably, JPFP played a significant role in the concept of "sustainable development." The establishment of the "World Commission on Environment and Development" (WCED), which was instrumental in forming the concept of "sustainable development" foundational to the SDGs, was proposed by members of JPFP through the Japanese government and established with Japan's contribution.

Additionally, JPFP, through collaboration with parliamentarians from various countries, networks of legislators in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, experts, international organizations, and civil society, advocates for the importance of population issues, shares mutual experiences, and engages in discussions towards related legislation and policy formation, motivating concrete actions for problem-solving. For example, in Egypt, a series of laws have been enacted, including those regarding the



National Council for Women, the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the National Council for Motherhood and Childhood, and the Rights of the Elderly. Since 2023, television programs on population and development issues have been produced to address and raise awareness about youth education and women's issues in various regions.

Additionally, the Global Environmental Action (GEA)¹⁰¹, with cross-party parliamentarians serving as executive committee members alongside representatives from the business and academic sectors, addressed the SDGs in 2013 to raise international awareness for the adoption of the 2030 Agenda. The conference was held under the theme "Departure from Rio+20: Towards a Sustainable Future—Economic Revitalization and Contribution to the International Community through Greening the Economy." The GEA has held international conferences every other year since the adoption of the 2030 agenda, covering themes related to global environmental issues aimed at achieving the SDGs. The 2022 event was held on the theme “Challenges and Opportunities for Sustainable Societies: Climate Change, Energy and Food Security.” In 2024, the event was held on the theme “Promoting Measures to Simultaneously Decarbonize and Achieve the SDGs: Overcoming the Triple Crisis of Climate Change, Biodiversity Loss, and Pollution.” Active discussions were held by parliamentarians, business representatives, and experts about measures to address global environmental issues.

¹⁰¹ The GEA was established in 1991 as an NGO to help solve global environmental problems and promote sustainable development. It started as the secretariat of the international conference Eminent Persons' Meeting on Financing Global Environment and Development (held in April 1992) and changed the organization name to the Global Environmental Action in 1995.

(4) Conclusion

In Japan, notable progress on the SDGs can be seen in several fields, such as broadly promoting awareness, creating business cases, localizing in communities, and changing behavior by using cooperatives. In these fields, it is safe to conclude that progress has been made in such aspects as systems, behavioral changes, and perceptions in comparison with possible situations without the SDGs.

Meanwhile, it has become clear that some issues remain to be addressed. For example, although many activities have taken place regarding gender equality and youth, they have yet to reach the point of starting transformation. Measures are also insufficient in support for marginalized groups such as non-Japanese people and those with disabilities. Cross-sectional work also remains underdeveloped, for example, in creating synergy between poverty countermeasures and actions for climate change and energy, as well as in collaborative work among poverty, employment, and gender fields. Possible causes for these include issues remaining in legislation, such as a basic law aimed to promote the SDGs, and in cross-cutting policy development and budgeting across the goals. There is a need to raise awareness that the SDGs are both international goals and important issues for domestic policies.

In Japan, discussions are also growing on well-being, questioning desirable growth, and on solutions to an aging society with a declining birthrate, that is occurring ahead of the rest of the world. The importance of discussions on an ideal digital space and the peaceful use of outer space is also increasing. In the post-SDGs era, an ideal society will need to be envisioned, also incorporating these issues mentioned above. Reflecting on the effective and ineffective aspects of past implementations, it is necessary to clarify the nature of goals and methods for implementation, as well as strategies to bridge gaps for problem-solving. A comprehensive promotion of the SDGs, treating all 17 goals as an integrated whole, is required through a joint effort between the public and private sectors.