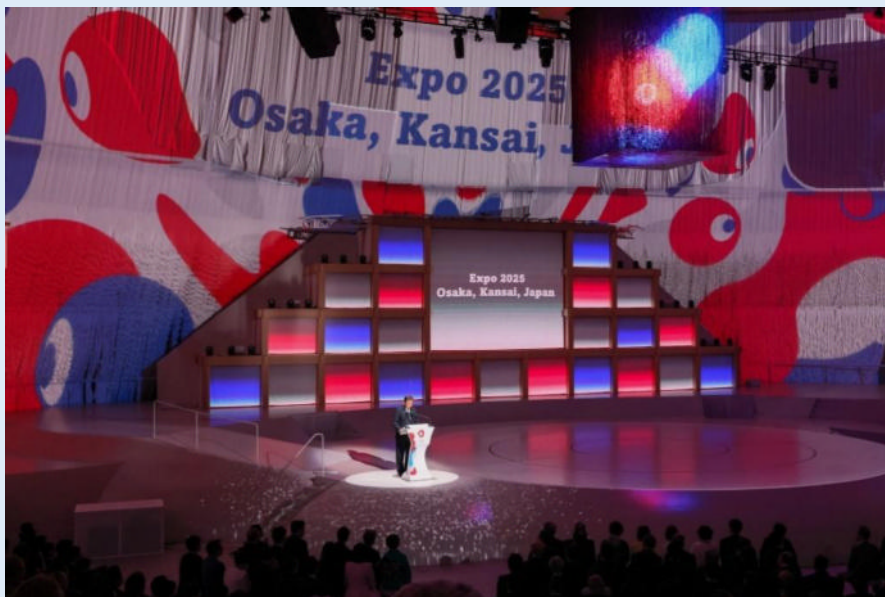


Column1: Expo2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan

Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan is taking place over 184 days from April 13 to October 13, 2025 under the theme “Designing Future Society for Our Lives,” and aims to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs and the realization of Japan's national strategy, Society 5.0.

There are three zones at the venue which correspond to the sub-themes of “Saving Lives”, “Empowering Lives”, and “Connecting Lives”, and pavilions for the official participants are arranged by theme. Official participants from around the world select a sub-theme or one or more of the 17 SDGs and bring forth outstanding initiatives to achieve the SDGs from each of their respective perspectives. With People’s Living Lab as the concept, the entire venue depicts a future society in which the SDGs were achieved.

On April 12, 2025, the opening ceremony of the Osaka-Kansai Expo was held in the presence of Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress, as well as Their Imperial Highnesses Crown Prince and Princess Akishino. The ceremony was attended by Prime Minister Ishiba, Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry Muto, and Minister for the World Expo 2025 Ito, among others. The following day, April 13, a tape-cutting ceremony took place, during which Chairman Tokura of the Japan Association for the Expo declared the opening of the Expo. Since the opening, many people have visited and enjoyed the Expo.



Prime Minister Ishiba greeting in the ceremony EXPO2025 Osaka, Kansai

Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office

<https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/103/actions/202504/12kaikaishiki.html>



Ribbon-cutting ceremony in EXPO2025 Osaka, Kansai



Photo: Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry

https://www.meti.go.jp/policy/exhibition/shuho_backnumbers/250415syuhou-hp.pdf

During the Expo, an initiative called Theme Weeks will be held in which countries from around the world together create a Future Society for Our Lives and solve global-scale issues through dialogue. A different global issue is set as the theme for approximately a week with dialogue programs for participants to discuss solutions and business exchanges for specific actions. This initiative gathers not only the organizer, the Japan Association for the 2025 World Exposition, but also official participants, the Japanese government and local governments, co-creation project participants, companies participating in the Expo, as well as local governments and industries from across the country.

Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan

- The World Expo is an event **organized by the Japanese government in accordance with the International Exposition Convention (BIE Convention)**. It holds **international significance and diplomatic importance, aiming to meet the high expectations of countries worldwide**, including those in the Global South, and striving to unite a divided world.

Event Overview	Category	Theme (Title for the week)
Title: Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan Venue: Yumeshima (Coastal area of Osaka) Duration: Sun. April 13 to Mon. October 13, 2025 Estimated visitor count: 28.20 million Number of participating countries: 158 / 7 international organizations Theme: Designing Future Society for Our Lives Concept: People's Living Lab 	Saving Lives Issues threatening people and life on earth	The Future of Earth and Biodiversity (September 17 to 28)
		Health and Well-Being (June 20 to July 1)
		Peace, Human Security, and Dignity (August 1 to 12)
	Empowering Lives Challenges that everyone faces in their pursuit of happy, productive lives	Necessities of Life: Food, Clothing and Shelter (June 5 to 16)
		Learning and Playing (July 17 to 28)
	Connecting Lives Challenges to enriching societies	Co-Creating Cultures for the Future (April 25 to May 6)
		The Future of Community and Mobility (May 15 to 26)
 	Designing Future Society for Our Lives Summary (final week)	SDGs+Beyond Future Society for Life (October 2 to 12)

PPT: Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry

Hosting the Osaka-Kansai Expo in Japan in 2025, five years before the SDGs target year of 2030, makes it a great opportunity to check in on the progress to date towards achieving the SDGs and accelerate efforts to achieve them. At the same time, Japan also hopes it will show the state of society beyond the goals (SDGs+Beyond).

the “Platform for the Creation of a Circular and Ecological Economy to Revitalize Local Communities from Environmental Aspect” project, the central government has supported a total of 86 regional communities through the creation of an environment that facilitates stakeholder organization, and provided entrepreneurs with the necessary assistance to develop project concepts.

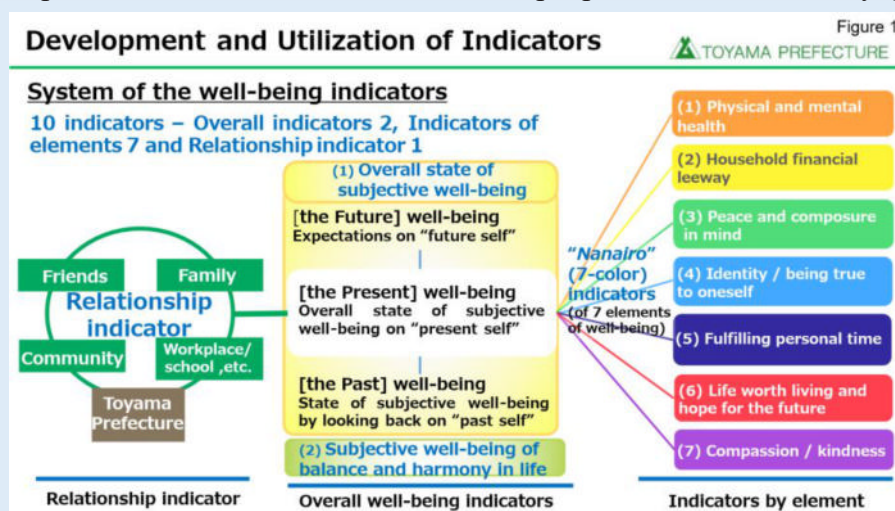
Column 2: Efforts to Create Unique Regional Well-Being Indicators

Cases from Toyama Prefecture

Toyama Prefecture, located in central region along the Sea of Japan, has a population of approximately 990,000 (as of March 2025) and has faced significant challenges due to population decline over the past 25 years. In a happiness survey conducted by a private organization for all 47 prefectures, Toyama ranked highly at third place nationwide based on objective data such as official statistics. However, it ranked low at 39th place based on subjective data from citizen surveys, highlighting a gap between the two evaluations.

Against this backdrop, Toyama Prefecture formulated the "Toyama's Growth Strategies" in February 2022, established with "well-being" as its core, under the awareness that "economic value represented by GDP (Gross domestic product) may not fully capture the 'happiness of the citizens.'" The strategy envisions "A happy greater community of 10 million people -Towards an Advanced Well-being Society in Toyama," aiming for a virtuous cycle where diverse talents gather in Toyama, feel well-being, foster active exchanges, create new industries and values, and further enhance the citizens' well-being alongside economic growth.

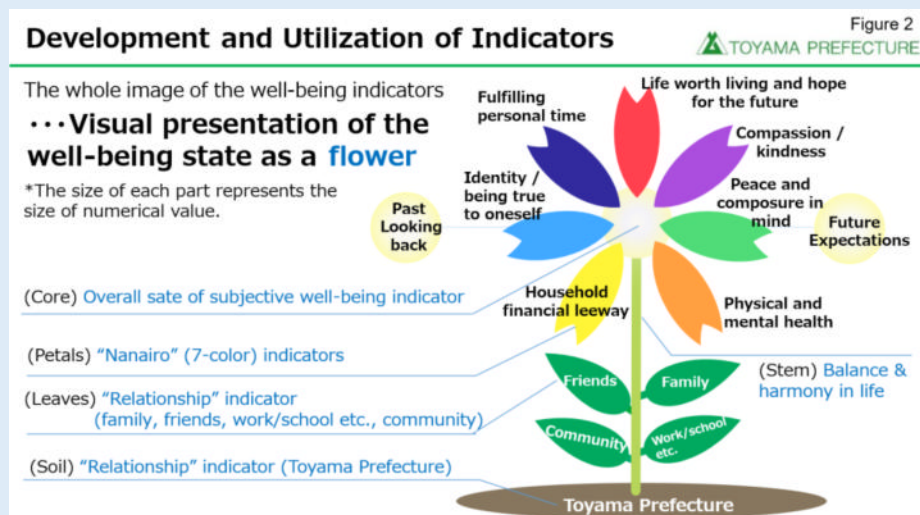
Toyama Prefecture's challenge began with the creation of well-being indicators. To understand the current state of citizens' well-being, the prefectural staff led the efforts to conduct citizen awareness surveys and analyze the results, developing a unique system of indicators. Considering the diversity in well-being that varies such as by age and gender, the indicators were organized into ten categories through correlation and factor analysis, focusing on subjective, multifaceted, and sustainable experiences, as well as connections with people and the community (Figure 1).



Moreover, to make citizens perceive it as relevant to themselves, the overall concept was visually expressed by likening it to flowers growing in the soil of Toyama Prefecture, and efforts were made in public relations and awareness-raising (Figure 2).

As a result of these efforts, the recognition of the term "well-being" among citizens improved from 15.6% in 2021 to 48.3% in 2024. The prefecture also launched a dedicated website on well-being and published a tool that allows individuals to check their well-being in five minutes. Additionally, initiatives such as participatory and experiential activities that inspire citizen awareness, consciousness, and action, as well as public relations and awareness activities through picture books, are being undertaken.

Furthermore, from 2024 onwards, Toyama Prefecture is sharing a "Citizen Awareness Survey Data Dashboard," organized according to this system of indicators, within the prefectural government and utilizing it in policy planning alongside other objective data. The future of Toyama Prefecture's initiative to incorporate subjective data into Evidence-Based Policy Making (EBPM) and aim to form policies that enhance well-being is anticipated. The future of initiatives in Toyama Prefecture looks promising.



(Utilization of science, technology, and innovation, including AI)

Science, technology, and innovation are playing an increasingly important role, particularly in identifying and addressing both issues in Japan and overseas in order to achieve all the goals of the SDGs comprehensively and in an integrated manner, it is necessary to maximize the use of innovative technologies such as digital technology and AI.

In particular, the Japanese government has formulated an AI strategy that outlines comprehensive guidelines and policies for systematically planning and promoting AI-related initiatives, including

Column 3: “Happy Economics” and a Sustainable Future (Written by Soichiro Chiba, a member of the SDGs Promotion Roundtable)

Introduction

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) represent a global framework designed to address the challenges facing the international community and to build a sustainable and inclusive future. I have been involved in fostering innovation and its social implementation, both domestically and internationally, as well as in creating an environment for young people and active generations in Japan to participate in international policy discussions through the management of Y7/Y20, the official engagement group for under 40s in the G7 and G20. Based on these experiences, in this column, I will examine Japan's leadership and the role of young people in achieving the SDGs, and the importance of innovation. I will also explore the challenges and possibilities that Japan should address in pursuit of a sustainable future.

1. The vision of “Happy Economics” to realize a sustainable society

Y7/Y20 Japan advocates three core pillars for building a sustainable society and economy, based on the belief that these interconnected elements must work together to achieve lasting impact.

(i) Health: Well-being of mind, body, and planet

In striving for a sustainable society, it is essential to achieve both physical and mental health and the preservation of the global environment. To that end, the following initiatives are crucial:

- Promoting individual well-being through the use of digital technology, while also embracing a perspective that is attuned to each person's emotions and inner thoughts.
- Promoting the development of preventative medicine, health-related industries, and health management.
- Realizing the sustainability of the global environment.

(ii) Growth: Growth of businesses and individuals

Fostering creativity and entrepreneurship forms the driving force for economic growth. The following are particularly important:

- Introducing and disseminating education that fosters creativity and leadership.
- Building an ecosystem that creates disruptive business models.

- Building a social system that embraces failure, encourages repeated attempts, and fosters a collaborative environment where people can learn from one another without holding each other back.

(iii) Connection: Bonds of hearts

Research has shown that human "bonds" based on trust and empathy are more important than economic factors as a determinant of individual happiness. To create a society where diverse individuals feel connected from the local to the global level, the following elements are essential:

- Fostering a culture that promotes mutual understanding and exchange across generations and backgrounds.
- Strengthening local roots and promoting education that fosters understanding of one's own country and an international perspective.
- Establishing systems that respect gender and diversity, enabling everyone to thrive.

These pillars concretely indicate the role Japan should play in achieving the SDGs, and we believe they serve as important guidelines for countries around the world seeking to achieve economic growth while addressing social challenges.

2. Japan's leadership toward a sustainable society

What initiatives are needed to build such a society in Japan—and scale it globally? While countries differ in their approaches to environmental issues, Japan is steadily advancing its position in the international community by committing to carbon neutrality by 2050. Research suggests ironically that this progress stems not only from environmental policy, but also from Japan's ability to turn structural challenges—such as population decline and economic stagnation—into strengths. A shrinking and aging population, typically viewed as a drag on economic growth, can also reduce environmental impact and thus contribute to long-term sustainability. We may be entering an era in which the very values of what is considered “good” and “bad” are undergoing fundamental change.

Given this context, Japan is expected to demonstrate a social model that integrates social, environmental, and economic values and to take a leadership role in the international community, as many countries will face similar challenges to Japan. Not only in the field of green transformation (GX), but also in the context of the rapid development of AI that is dramatically changing the social structure, Japan, which has diverse and advanced social challenges, has the opportunity to show the world a path to a sustainable society and become a role model for the world. Crucially, this requires not simply adopting frameworks established by the West, but

articulating and sharing a distinct Japanese vision—both at home and on the global stage—of what a future society can and should look like.

To achieve this, it is essential to clearly understand the country's strengths and weaknesses, and to develop strategies that actively incorporate the perspectives of students and young people in their 20s, working generations in their 30s to 50s, and the wisdom and rich experience of those over 60 who helped shape the present era.

3. The path to the future: Commercializing innovation as a key driver


For Japan to demonstrate true international leadership in achieving the SDGs, it must go beyond policy and place a strong emphasis on commercializing innovation. While innovation is clearly essential to solving unresolved social challenges, it holds little value if it remains confined to research and development (R&D) or patent counts alone. What truly matters is the ability to generate new economic value by transforming existing business structures through disruptive innovation. In fact, Japan ranks among the world's leaders in R&D—5th in R&D investment, 3rd in patent acquisition, and 1st in intellectual property income⁸. However, turning these achievements into tangible commercial success remains a challenge. For instance, Japan ranks 83rd in ICT service exports, 43rd in unicorn company valuations, and 111th in labor productivity growth—figures that suggest Japan is not fully harnessing its potential for economic growth⁹. Moreover, much of Japan's R&D is still concentrated on incremental improvements in established fields. Looking ahead, a fundamental shift is needed: one that focuses on strategic, market-oriented innovation and begins from the pressing global challenges we face.

Through my involvement with Y7/Y20, I've had numerous conversations with young people. While many express support for the SDGs, one common reason they struggle to see these goals as personally relevant is that they aren't directly tied to economic value. This is especially true in Japan, where a significant portion of the population faces financial hardship—making abstract or vague efforts to address social issues difficult to connect with, regardless of age. To truly advance the SDGs, it is essential to promote innovation that fuels economic growth and ensure it leads to tangible commercialization.

In this process, it is necessary to promote the commercialization of innovative venture companies and innovation within companies, and the power of young people is indispensable. Historically, many disruptive innovations have been born from young entrepreneurs in their 20s and 30s, or at the latest, in their 40s. It is therefore crucial to provide younger generations with the right

⁸ Reference: derived from data presented in the World Intellectual Property Organization's "Global Innovation Index 2023."

⁹ Ibid.



environment and culture, access to high-quality education, and sufficient resources to enable them to become the driving force of innovation.

However, this does not mean that innovation should be limited to young people. In countries where innovation is thriving, individuals across a wide range of generations—not just those in their 20s and 30s—are actively engaged in entrepreneurship and advancing technological innovation. In many places, it is socially accepted—even encouraged—for senior citizens to start businesses as a second career after retirement. By reshaping Japan’s social structure to support this kind of multigenerational participation, the country can foster an environment where people of all ages can contribute to innovation. This, in turn, could significantly enhance Japan’s overall innovation capacity and global competitiveness.

4. Moving beyond self-reliance bias and the importance of international collaboration

One of the key lessons from Japan’s past economic successes is the importance of “breaking free from an excessive reliance” on internal development. For instance, Japan’s automobile industry thrived globally by refining and commercializing core technologies originally developed in the West. Similarly, today, Japan can once again achieve sustainable growth by cultivating an ecosystem that swiftly commercializes innovation—leveraging insights, technologies, and business models from around the world.

In recent years, however, a tendency toward an excessive reliance on internal development in some sectors has, at times, hindered innovation in Japan. This is particularly evident in fields such as AI, green transformation (GX), and other emerging technologies, where accelerating innovation through international collaboration and the adoption of global technologies is essential. Such an approach would not only enable Japan to more effectively address SDG-related challenges both domestically and internationally, but also enhance its economic competitiveness. Furthermore, such efforts could help Japan move away from a technology-driven or reactive approach to new business development. Instead, by adopting a globally informed perspective to identify priority areas, Japan can send a clear message to young people: *“This is where your ideas can make the greatest impact.”* Such strategic direction could serve as a powerful guidepost for the younger generation as they forge the future.

5. Conclusion

For Japan to achieve a sustainable society and assume a leadership role in the global pursuit of the SDGs, it is imperative to develop a social model that harmonizes environmental, economic, and social values. This model must then be effectively communicated to the international community. To accomplish this, Japan must undertake an accurate analysis of its challenges and potential, leading to the construction of a novel effective social model grounded in a shared vision of a sustainable future. Crucially, this effort must embrace a truly intergenerational perspective—

actively incorporating the voices of students and young people in their 20s, the working generations in their 30s to 50s, and the accumulated wisdom of those over 60 who have shaped the foundation of modern Japan. Additionally, empowering active generations as innovation drivers requires fostering an environment that encourages challenges, providing high-quality education, and ensuring adequate resources.

History bears witness to the countless transformative business models that have originated from young entrepreneurs, highlighting the critical need to create a system that supports their potential across all levels of society. Furthermore, by moving beyond a bias toward self-reliance and proactively integrating the world's most advanced technologies and knowledge, Japan can enhance its global competitiveness and offer clear direction to the active generations—highlighting where the greatest opportunities for impact and innovation lie.

Through these efforts, innovation will thrive, paving the way for a society in which all generations can enjoy healthy lives, pursue meaningful growth, and build deep, lasting connections. This is the vision of “Happy Economics” brought to life—a model of sustainable prosperity that positions Japan as a global beacon and a role model for others to follow.

Column 4: Declining birthrate and aging society

(Situation surrounding declining birthrate and aging society)

The population aged 65 and over in Japan is 36.24 million compared to the total population of 123.80 million or 29.3% (as of October 2024). This is estimated to grow to around 35% in 2040. Furthermore, the baby boomer generation will be 75 years old in 2025, making the population aged 75 and over to about 18% of the total population. In other words, approximately 1 in 4 citizen will be 75 years old or older, thereby creating a “super-aging society”. Various issues associated with such changes in the population structure are becoming apparent and as an advanced country, Japan is currently considering its responses.

(Measures against an aging society)

Japan has promoted measures to respond to an aging society in accordance with the three basic ideas identified in the “Guideline of Measures for an Ageing Society” (decided by the Cabinet on February 16, 2018). These are i) review standardization by age and aim at creating an age-free society in which people of all ages can leverage their motivation and abilities based on what they desire; ii) develop a community life base and create a local community where people can imagine their elderly life regardless of their stage in life; iii) aim for new measures for an ageing society by using the innovation of technological achievements. Also, in 2024, a new “Guideline of Measures for an Ageing Society” was formulated (decided by the Cabinet on September, 2024) in which various policies are being promoted in line with the three following basic ideas: i) build an economy and society where people can continue to play an active role according to their wishes regardless of age; ii) respond appropriately to changes in the environment such as the increase of elderly people living alone and build a society where multiple generations can live with peace of mind; iii) develop detailed policy and build a social system that responds to changes in physical and cognitive functions associated with aging.

To create an environment where people are able to work as they wish regardless of age, particularly for the employment of elderly people, the government has stipulated in the “Act on Stabilization of Employment of Elderly Persons” that their employment should be secured until the age of 65. Additionally, Japan has promoted initiatives such as improving skills and re-skilling aimed at realizing a society where the elderly who desire to work, can continue to work for all their life, regardless of age.

(Urban development for an aging society)

To realize a society where multiple generations can live with peace of mind, it is necessary to create an environment where everyone can move freely. To that end, Japan is accelerating efforts to secure means of transportation for local residents, starting with the elderly, and to restructure regional public transportation. Efforts will be made to further improve the accessibility of public transportation, buildings, etc. The government will also enhance mobility support services in

regional communities as well as promote the development and spread of autonomous driving technology and driver assistance systems.

As the number of elderly people living alone is expected to increase in the future, it is necessary to ensure people are able to live safely and securely in the regional communities even in their old age. Furthermore, it is important to enhance regional safety net functions by creating an environment where local community development can be carried out with the participation of a wide range of generations so as to build a society in local communities where people live together and support each other across all ages.

(New measures through technological innovation)

To maintain and improve the quality of life and reduce the burden on caregivers through independence support, etc. to the elderly, the government will promote cooperation between private companies and research institutes on medical devices, technology for long-term care. In addition, in long-term care field, Japan provides comprehensive tech support from R&D to market launch through CARISO (CARE Innovation Support Office). The government will make advancements in research to understand the pathology and the pathogenic mechanisms of illnesses to which people are prone in our elderly years, and also accelerate drug discovery. By utilizing cutting-edge science and technology such as genomics, the Japanese government will advance the research and development, and clinical application of new medical technology while also aiming to establish effective healthcare technology.

(Building a social security system for all generations)

In addition to the above, the Japanese government has built a Universal Health Coverage (UHC) where all people can enjoy basic health care services when necessary, at an affordable cost. Through the national health insurance system, Japan has achieved the world's highest levels of life expectancy at birth and healthcare standards. Going forward, the Japanese government aims to build a “Social Security System Oriented to All Generations” in which all generations support each other according to their abilities so as to build a sustainable social security system.

(Countermeasures against a low fertility)

The Japanese government also formulated the “Children's Future Strategy” in December 2023 to reverse the declining birthrate trend. This strategy aimed to create a society where young people can get married as desired, have children, and raise children with peace of mind, and identified three principles: increase the income of young people, change the structure and awareness of society as a whole, and support all children and child-rearing households without interruption. To achieve this, the “Acceleration Plan” radically enhanced support for children and childrearing on an unprecedented scale by expanding the child allowance, establishing the “Connecting All Children to ECEC System”, and promoting flexible work styles, etc., and Japan has seen solid implementation of the plan.

logistics operators, food banks, and children's cafeterias, etc. cooperate to provide various foods to such people. Japan is also promoting initiatives for food banks, children's cafeterias, etc. to provide food that is sufficient in terms of quality and quantity, and support for last-mile deliveries, etc.

The “Local Council for Ensuring the Safety of Consumers” are available in over 540 local municipalities around the country (as of the end of March 2025) to watch over consumers requiring support such as elderly people with dementia and people with disabilities, etc. These councils work in collaboration with the regional consumer affairs centers and welfare departments to advance regional monitoring activities aimed at preventing consumer damage and damage relief.

Based on the "Act on the Utilization of Funds from Dormant Deposits to Promote Privately-Run Public Interest Activities," which was enacted in December 2016, the initiative to utilize dormant deposits began in 2019. As of the end of March 2025, the total amount planned for grants and investments (cumulative) is approximately 36.2 billion yen, with about 1,350 projects (cumulative). This initiative targets the resolution of social issues that are difficult to address through public systems, with around 70% of the projects supporting socially vulnerable groups and promoting social inclusion, such as support for children, youth, and people facing hardship.

Column 5: Expanding initiatives for mutual assistance

[Case 1] Toyota City’s “Zutto Genki! (keep staying healthy and energetic) Project” ~ Public-Private Partnership for Preventive Care ~

Located in central Japan, Toyota City in Aichi Prefecture has a population of approximately 420,000 people, and according to 2020 data, the rate of aging has reached 23.1%, indicating a progressing aging population year by year. The “Zutto Genki! Project” began in July 2021 with a project period of five years or until June 2026 and provides various preventive care programs including sports, hobbies, and communication. Through such programs, this project aims to reduce future long-term care costs.

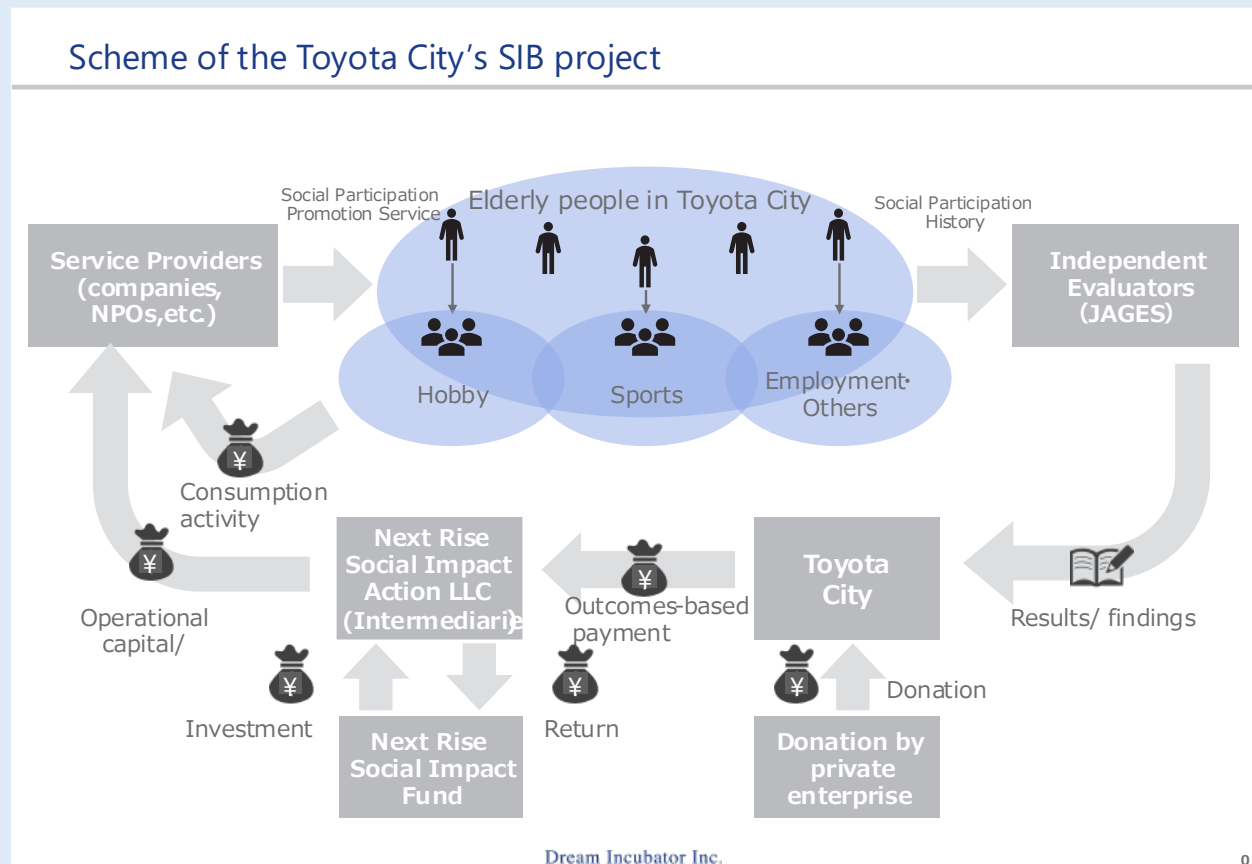
The project came about as a result of concerns for increasing long-term care risks associated with the rapidly progressing aging population. To further exacerbate these concerns were the restrictions on going out that were placed on the elderly during the COVID-19 pandemic, increasing the possibility for an even greater risk. Based on this situation, a project was started, aimed at reducing long-term care risk by increasing the “opportunities for social participation and the amount of social activity” for the elderly through hobbies, exercise, and employment, etc. This project sought to provide people with various human connections as well as a “purpose in life” and “enjoyment” so as to realize a lifestyle where one could feel greater “happiness”.

This project utilizes a mechanism called a social impact bond (SIB), which leverages the knowledge and funds of private companies to solve social issues in return for performance-based compensation. Over a five-year period, Dream Incubator Inc. has invested 500 million yen and in

cooperation with Toyota City, and has worked with various businesses to manage the project as a whole. A characteristic of this project is the evaluation and management based on specific numerical targets (reduce long-term care costs by one billion yen over five years). A third party evaluation conducted by the Japan Gerontological Evaluation Study (JAGES) showed that the actual impact as of the second year was estimated at approximately 370 million yen, and the target of one billion yen in reduction was expected to be ultimately achieved.

Many local businesses are participating in this effort. The local NPO, “Workers' Smile Creation Research Institute”, is responsible for building a network of local companies and participate in the project in conjunction with the Next Rise Social Impact Action Organization, a subsidiary of Dream Incubator Inc. The emphasis is on being able to continuously support the elderly rather than ending with a one-off event.

In this way, efforts are being made towards preventive long-term care in Toyota City with the cooperation between the government, and private businesses and NPOs.



[Case 2] Consumer Cooperative Initiatives to Build Local Communities

A consumer cooperative is one type of cooperative that is established based on the “Consumers' Livelihood Co-operative Society Law” and is an organization where members who are users, contribute to the capital of the cooperative, make decisions, and operates it. Its characteristics are that “everyone contributes to its capital, everyone operates it, and everyone uses it”. In FY2023,

there were 30.63 million consumer cooperative members and the total business turnover of consumer cooperatives was 3,737.9 billion yen (approximately 27.3 billion US dollars).¹¹ In terms of business types, they are engaged in businesses that support daily life, such as supplying consumer goods via home delivery and at retail stores, and providing insurance, and medical and welfare services.

Consumer cooperatives provide “community watch-over activities” by utilizing the home delivery business infrastructure and have signed agreements on such activities with 1,300 municipalities. This is equivalent to 74.7% of all 1,741 municipalities (as of January 2025). Specifically, if the delivery item is left untouched, or no one answers the intercom, or the electricity is left on, the delivery staff will notice these abnormalities and will contact the pre-registered emergency contact number and, if necessary, contact the hospital or police. There have been cases where no one is home due to travel or hospitalization, but there have been emergency situations where a person had collapsed at home. In addition, consumer cooperatives also conduct activities to support the lives of local residents, signing comprehensive cooperation agreements with prefectural governments. As an example, in Fudai village in Iwate prefecture, a dinner delivery service was launched to provide nutritionally balanced meals to people who were unable to cook due to the progressive aging. Through the delivery of meals, the delivery staff are able to watch over these people, thereby contributing to the safe and secure living of elderly households.

Consumer cooperatives also collaborate with organizations that carry out initiatives to resolve local issues. From April 2021, with the approval of the prefectures, consumer cooperatives are able to supply goods to organizations that work to resolve local issues such as difficulties in shopping and provide support to people living in need. Additionally, a free car service to the store is provided for the elderly who have difficulties going shopping. Based on a pre-determined day and time, this share-ride system operates every week. This initiative enables people to maintain a normal lifestyle of “going to the store and choosing goods on their own”. To date, a total of 151,206 people (FY2023) have used this service.

¹¹ Calculated based on a rate of 1 US dollar to 137 yen

As organizations working for the sustainable development of their communities, consumer cooperatives are actively working to realize local communities where people can continue to live with peace of mind. Moreover, the participation of cooperative members in the initiatives of their cooperatives cultivates their independence and provides them with various values such as the joy of growth and a sense of their lives being enriched. These activities can be considered as good practices towards the achievement of the SDGs.



CO-OP servicing pickup and drop-off on shopping
(Photo: the consumer cooperative in Kagawa)

[Case 3] Achieving an Inclusive Society Where “No One is Left Behind” Through the Dormant Deposits Utilization System

Dormant deposits refer to accounts that have had no transactions, such as deposits or withdrawals, for over 10 years, generating around 130 to 160 billion yen annually. Following the enactment of the "Act on the Utilization of Funds from Dormant Deposits to Promote Privately-Run Public Interest Activities" in December 2016 and its enforcement in January 2018, the Japan Network for Public Interest Activities (JANPIA), a general incorporated foundation, was appointed in January 2019 as the "designated utilization organization" under this law. As stated in its vision, "Become a catalyst to create a sustainable society, leaving no one behind," JANPIA aims to be a catalyst that supports those who continue to challenge social issues with innovative methods, ensuring that a sustainable society is passed on to future generations without leaving anyone behind, in line with the principles of the SDGs.

Dormant deposits provided to JANPIA by the Deposit Insurance Corporation are utilized for activities conducted by private organizations in the following three areas:

- Activities related to the support of children and youth
- Activities related to the support of individuals facing difficulties in daily or social life
- Activities related to the support of regions facing social challenges such as declining vitality in local communities.

As of the end of March 2025, the cumulative total amount planned for grants and investments is approximately 36.2 billion yen, with about 1,350 projects (cumulative). The dormant deposits utilization initiative comprehensively addresses the 17 SDG goals, with approximately 70% of the projects focused on promoting respect for human rights and social inclusion, which are emphasized by the SDGs. In particular, the projects often relate to Goal 1 "End poverty in all its forms everywhere," Goal 3 "Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages," Goal 4 "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all," Goal 5 "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls," Goal 8 "Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all," Goal 11 "Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable," and Goal 17 "Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development."

(Radical reinforcement of children's policies and the promotion of education)

Against the backdrop of the difficult environment that surround children,¹² the Children and Families Agency was established in April 2023. By always considering the perspective of the child and prioritizing the child's best interests, the agency's objective is to realize a "children-centered society" that puts initiatives and policies related to children in the center of Japan's society. At the same time, the Basic Act on Children's Policy came into effect as a comprehensive law to broadly and strongly promote children's policies throughout society. In December of the same year, based on the Basic Act on Children's Policy, the "General Principles for Child-Related Measures" which stipulated basic policies concerning child-related measures was decided by the Cabinet to drastically enhance child-related policies. These principles aimed to realize a society where all children and young people can live their life in a state of happiness physically, mentally, and socially. Efforts are also underway to hear those views of children and young people with regards to individual policies and to reflect these views in policies.

Furthermore, Japan has made efforts to provide substantial financial support such as free preschool education and childcare (implemented since October 2019), initiatives to improve the quality of education for children in early childhood and the transition period to the elementary school education stage, and the new financial support system for higher education (launched April 2020 and provides reduction on tuition fees, etc. and scholarship grants). To further enhance education for students with disabilities, Japan is also working to promote special needs education in schools and to improve education and learning environments that promote lifelong learning for people with disabilities after graduation from school. In addition, to maximize the potential of all children, the "GIGA School

¹² The term "child" is defined as defined in Article 2 of the Basic Act on Children's Policy.

Column 6: Radical reinforcement of children's policies: the establishment the Children and Families Agency

(The establishment of the Children and Families Agency)

In 2023, the Japanese government newly established the Children and Families Agency. The purpose of the Children and Families Agency is to centrally promote policies related to children and families, and provide more effective support. Child policies to date were based on the Basic Act for Measures to Cope with Society with Declining Birthrate and the Act on Promotion of Development and Support for Children and Young People, etc., and the Japanese government has worked hard on these various policies. However, with the number of child abuse consultations, the number of students with chronic absenteeism, and the number of serious bullying cases all still remaining high, the environment surrounding children and families has become severe.

Against this background, on December 21, 2021, the Cabinet decision was passed to establish the Children and Families Agency. By always considering the perspective of the child and prioritizing the child's best interests, the agency's objective is to realize a "Children-Centered Society" that puts initiatives and policies related to children in the center of Japan's society. The Act Establishing the Children and Families Agency was enacted on June 15, 2022 and the Children and Families Agency was officially inaugurated on April 1, 2023.

The Children and Families Agency aims to realize a society where children can grow healthily as independent individuals, and conducts affairs relating to improving the welfare and health of children and families, providing child-rearing support, and protecting the rights and interests of children. Furthermore, the agency centralizes jurisdiction over child policy which until now were managed by multiple ministries and agencies, and plays a role in tackling new policy issues.

(Major developments since the establishment of the Children and Families Agency)

The Children and Families Agency has promoted several important measures including the formulation of the "Children's Future Strategy" with the "Acceleration Plan" on a scale of 3.6 trillion yen (about 24 billion US dollars¹⁴), the enactment of the revised Child and Childcare Support Act, the formulation of a "basic vision for raising children until early childhood", and the establishment of the Prevention of Sexual Violence against Children Act.

Going forward, in an aim to realize a "Children-Centered Society", it will be necessary to dedicate all our efforts into comprehensively promoting children's policies, supporting the pursuit of happiness among children, young people, and those involved in raising children while also drastically changing the trend of declining birthrate, and for society as a whole, to nurture human resources that will lead the future of our country. Specifically, Japan will rapidly implement

¹⁴ Calculated by the secretariat based on the FY2023 exchange rate of 1 US dollar to 149.63 yen

measures based on the “Children's Future Strategy”, and work steadily to tackle measures for the protection of children from sexual violence, child safety, prevention of abuse, suicide, bullying, and chronic absenteeism.

(Raising awareness on the rights of children and young people, their social participation, and reflection of their views)

The General Principles for Child-Related Measures aims to widely inform society that children and youth are holders of rights by disseminating information about the objectives and contents of the Basic Act on Children's Policy and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Based on this, efforts are being made to raise awareness. Starting in 2024, the "Child Rights Project," which aims to increase awareness on child rights, is being promoted in collaboration with the Japan Committee for UNICEF. Also, in the General Principles for Child-Related Measures, “respecting the viewpoints of children, young people, and those raising children, and hearing those views, discussing with them and taking action together” is considered to be one of the basic principles for child-related measures. Therefore, social participation of children and young people and a reflection of their opinions and views is indicated as necessary for the promotion of child-related measures. Considering the basic principles of the Basic Act on Children's Policy, social participation of children and young people and a reflection of their opinions and views are like two wheels of a car; it is not possible to advance one without the other. Regarding this point, taking into account the intent of this Act, an initiative to hear those views of children and young people regarding policies and to reflect them in policies began in FY2023 called “Kodomo Wakamono★Iken Plus (Program to Promote Reflection of Opinions and Views of Children and Young People)”. In FY2024, the government heard views from a total of approximately 1,900 children and young people on 22 themes. This initiative was not only for themes set by each ministry and agency but also included hearing those views for themes proposed by children and young people.

(Participation of youth and young people)

There are numerous youth and young people's organizations engaged in activities to promote the achievement of the SDGs. As an example, the “Next Generation Platform for Promoting SDGs”, whose establishment was decided at the 6th meeting of the SDGs Promotion Headquarters in 2018, has been involved with activities to promote SDGs among young people. As of March 2025, members of this platform include G7/G20 Youth Japan, the Junior Chamber International Japan (Japan JC), and the Japan Youth Platform for Sustainability (JYPS).

Since the previous VNR conducted in 2021, members of the above platform joined the SDGs Promotion Roundtable as youth representatives. Furthermore, the SDGs Implementation Guiding Principles revised in December 2023 stated that “the government will work to expand the meaningful participation of younger generations” and in October 2024, the number of youth and young people

representatives was increased to two people. In April 2024, the “Advisory Panel on Sustainability of the International Community” was launched under Foreign Minister Kamikawa with participation of experts from various fields. One member of the above platform participated in the meeting and presented opinions from a youth perspective on ensuring growth and sustainability beyond the 2030 deadline for SDGs.

Members of the platform attended the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Youth Forums in 2022, 2023, and 2024 as representatives of Japan and conveyed the opinions of young people in Japan. In 2024, in preparation for the UN Summit of the Future, members of the platform participated in the “Dialogue between Foreign Minister Kamikawa and the Youths” in July. In September, a total of five young people, including one from the platform, attended the UN Summit of the Future as members of a Japanese government delegation and as evident by the Summit of the Future outcome document, the importance of the role of the youth was recognized. There has also been youth participation in events such as those held during a visit to Japan in December by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Administrator, Mr. Steiner during which opinions regarding the meaningful participation of young people were sent out.

With the objective to nurture future leaders who can raise awareness for disaster prevention and enhance the resilience of the country, Japan has held a High School Students Summit on “World Tsunami Awareness Day” six times since 2016, with participation from a total of 2,163 high school students from both Japan and abroad. The high school students who served as the chairman and vice-chairman at the event held in Kumamoto in October 2024 also took the stage at the “World Tsunami Awareness Day” at the UN headquarters in November and spoke to the world regarding the results of the summit.

Column 7: Next generation SDGs promotion platform

In this column, the three organizations constituting the Next Generation Platform for Promoting SDGs write and introduce the outlines and activities of each organization.

Japan Youth Platform for Sustainability (JYPS)

(Group overview)

JYPS was established in 2015 as an organization that gathers the voices of young people in Japan and establishes a place to deliver them as policy recommendations to the Japanese government, the United Nations, and civil society. The opinions and sentiments of young people from diverse backgrounds are collected via organized events and opinion surveys, and through meaningful participation in opinion exchange meetings with the Japanese government and international conferences, the organization seeks to create a sustainable society in which opinions of young people are reflected.

(Activities and achievements)

JYPS conducted a survey on the voice of young people in Japan and their state of affairs for the Voluntary Youth Review (VYR) related to the 2025 VNR. Based on the 17 goals of SDGs, the themes were narrowed down to the four themes of “inequality/poverty/gender”, “education/wellbeing”, “environment/climate/biodiversity”, and “youth participation” about which questionnaires, interviews, and discussion events were conducted.

For the theme “inequality/poverty/gender”, it became clear how economic conditions affect higher education progression and how depending on the region, there were disparities in learning environments and career path fixation. Gender was also found to be a big influence and it was evident that there was a growing number of young people who felt restrictions with regards to gender when considering advancing to the next stage of education or with regards to the learning environment.

In “education/wellbeing”, there were calls for opportunities for extracurricular activities, practical use of technology, and the practical use of English. Awareness regarding comprehensive sex education was low and responses showed a desire for it to be introduced in all schools. While the concept of well-being was understood, there was no uniform sense of values for the specific meaning, and there were also groups that showed indifference.

In “environment/climate/biodiversity”, awareness for the importance of climate change and biodiversity was high but poor understanding and lack of information emerged as issues in encouraging behavioral change. On the other hand, it became apparent that relationships with nature and opportunities for discussion raised awareness for problem solving. With regards to nuclear power generation, the majority of voices desired its long-term abolition.

In terms of youth participation, while there were many young people with positive views of the future, there were also many that for whom interest in politics was low. To resolve this, young people wanted a place where they could discuss with adults on equal terms and it became evident that there are many young people who wished to participate in organizations and decision-making bodies dealing with social issues.

A report of these results were handed over to various ministries and agencies, international organizations, etc. and advocacy activities that reflect the current situation and issues of young people are being developed.

(Meaningful youth participation in international conferences)

To realize a sustainable society under the SDG principle where “no one is left behind”, collaboration across borders, fields, sectors, and generations is essential. As stated by United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, “meaningful, diverse, and effective youth participation – inside the United Nations and far beyond – is essential to (...) achieving the Sustainable Development Goals” and therefore, meaningful youth participation should be

guaranteed.¹⁵ It is recommended that the Japanese government dispatch young Japanese people, starting with members of the Next Generation Platform, to international conferences as government delegates.

The ECOSOC Youth Forum is an important conference hosted by ECOSOC for young people to contribute to policy discussions at a global level. At the 2024 conference, a member of the government delegation spoke about geopolitical barriers for young people from the Asian region when participating in meetings held mainly in Europe and the United States and received a lot of support from young people in the same region. Going forward, it is important to continue increasing the presence of young Japanese people at international conferences and to strengthen cooperative relationships from the viewpoint of young people that transcend politics and interests.

The United Nations Summit of the Future was held with the aim of considering concrete proposals for achieving the SDGs and tackling evolving new issues. In the Summit's outcome document, “Pact for the Future”, the attendees committed to promoting the resolution of a wide range of issues such as sustainable development, international peace and security, human rights, global governance transformation, digital cooperation, youth and future generations, etc. Specific actions related to young people and future generations that should be highlighted are as follows.

- Scale up investment in essential services for young people to ensure they are able to participate fully in the social and economic development of their own countries
Commitment to increase investment in essential services for young people and ensure that they can participate fully in the socio-economic development of their countries (Action 36)
- Promote, protect and respect the human rights of all young people and foster social inclusion and integration (Action 37)
- Strengthen meaningful youth participation in decision-making processes at the national and international levels (Actions 38/39)

Also, as a pre-event to the UN Summit of the Future, “#YouthLead”, a campaign with the theme of empowering youths was held in which young people from Japan participated in the discussions. In a poll of the participants at the event, the majority of opinions described the current participation of young people as “tokenism” and sought for an increase in opportunities for meaningful participation of young people.

Accumulating specific progresses based on the guidelines for action, such as (1) strengthening sovereign education, (2) establishing opportunities for mid- to long-term participation and opinion exchange regardless of region and economic disparities, (3) creating a system to protect young people from risks from participation (harassment, slander, academic disruption, etc.), (4) guaranteeing access to information, and (5) strengthening accountability related to decision

¹⁵ United Nations ‘Young People’s Meaningful Involvement Vital for Advancing Sustainable Development Goals, Speakers Stress as Youth Forum Concludes’ <https://press.un.org/en/2022/ecosoc7076.doc.htm>.

making and implementation process, will further promote meaningful youth participation which in turn will contribute to the realization of a sustainable society.

Junior Chamber International Japan (Japan JC)

(Group overview)

Japan JC began in 1949 with the establishment of the Tokyo Junior Chamber of Commerce by young volunteers with a sense of responsibility and passion, based on the ideal of realizing a bright and prosperous society. Based on the three creeds of training, service, and friendship, the organization is proactively working on volunteering initiatives and tackling various social issues with the aim of creating a better society.

(Activities and achievements)

Japan JC has hosted the JCI JAPAN Global Youth Ambassador Development Project every year since 2011. This project teaches youths about international relations and world peace and fosters human resources that can play an active role overseas in the future. Every year, middle and high school students from all over Japan are selected as ambassadors, and training is held both domestically and internationally.

In FY2023, a total of three domestic training sessions were held, and for the international training, students visited wells and poultry farms in Cambodia that were supported by Japan JC through the “Smile by Water campaign”. This experience taught them about international support activities aimed at resolving SDGs Goal 6: “ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all”. A forum was also held at Tokyo Big Sight to which Deputy Foreign Minister Horii was invited and a lively exchange opinions on issues and difficulties faced by participants to achieve the SDGs took place. Furthermore, in New York, they visited the United Nations Headquarters and paid a courtesy visit to Izumi Nakamitsu, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Headquarters. They also visited the Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations and the Consulate General of Japan in New York. At a lunch gathering with local New York high school students, they talked about peace over pizza, and in an exchange of opinions with the United Nations Envoy on Youth, they deepened their understanding of the influence of young people's ability to communicate and the importance of correct understanding and information dissemination.

In FY2024, during their domestic training, the youth ambassadors attended lectures on diversity by Sri Lankan born sociologist, Mr. Nishantha, on war and peace from Mr. Steven Lloyd Leeper, who served successive posts as the chairperson of the Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation (Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum), and about cultural differences between Japan and overseas and the current state of education overseas from Mr. Masaki Fujimoto, a Japanese person active overseas. Through three domestic training sessions, they considered what they could do to achieve world peace and participated in discussions.

The first country they visited for their overseas training was Cambodia. There, they visited the Killing Fields where the massacre under the Pol Pot administration took place and learned about the cruel past and cultural differences through group work with local children. In the Philippines, which was the second country they visited, they learned from Mr. Tomo Matsui who operates a library on Mindanao Island and supports local children. They learned about the current situation in the Philippines and that there were many children who lived in close proximity to danger.

Since their return to Japan, the ambassadors have carried out awareness-raising activities primarily in their regions of origin, and we will ensure that there are opportunities for as many people as possible to take action for peace.

G7/G20 Youth Japan

(Group overview)

G7/G20 Youth Japan was established in 2008 for young people with academic knowledge and expertise to provide constructive policy recommendations. The organization dispatches a Japanese delegations primarily to the Y7 summit and the Y20 summit (hereafter “Y7/Y20”).

(Recent activities and achievements)

In conjunction with the 2023 G7 Summit in Japan, they hosted the Y7 Summit 2023 Japan (Y7 Japan). Prior to the summit, public discussion events and youth awareness surveys were conducted for each theme, such as peace and security, economy, climate change and environmental issues, health and welfare, and digital innovation. Also, in collaboration with the United Nations University, we also hosted the G7 High School Summit 2023. This event brought together approximately 120 high school students and provided them with an opportunity to make policy proposals from the perspective of high school students.

The following responses and suggestions were obtained in the annual survey of young people's attitudes.

- ① 80% answered that there are people, including themselves, in disadvantageous positions at work or school for irrational reasons, and the main causes were gender, age, and disability. The survey showed that the inclusive society envisioned by youths was a society in which they can contribute and play an active role regardless of background or identity.
- ② Responses showed that the most important constituents to contribute to future technological development for sustainability, climate change, and energy, etc. were 30% small to medium companies and venture businesses, 20% large enterprises, 20% international organizations, and 19% governments. This showed that youths had high expectations for small to medium companies and venture businesses.
- ③ Approximately 80% responded negatively regarding the possibility of working continuously at one company/organization, and more than half answered that they had or currently have side jobs or considered taking side jobs. The survey taught us that for young people, demonstrating their own abilities, growth, and money were some of the criteria considered when selecting a work environment.

Furthermore, at discussion events held every year, dialogues were held on the importance of cooperation and cooperation beyond national boundaries for global issues, the necessity of co-creating a sustainable society involving the Global South, and the realization of an inclusive society to protect mental and physical safety and security. There were also opinions raised regarding the development of digital human resources and the activities of minority human resources, including women, as necessary for sustainable economic development, and the need to create common guidelines across countries for climate change and digital technology that is undergoing rapid progress.

The opinions of the many young people that are gathered through these surveys were compiled as communiques by the Japanese delegation, for discussion amongst young people from each countries. These opinions have been proposed to G7/G20 every year. At Y7 Japan in 2023, the findings were submitted to Prime Minister Kishida and were proposed to the G7. Similarly in 2024, proposals were made to the G7 in Italy and G20 in Brazil.

Separate from the Y7/Y20 above, based on the past questionnaires accumulated, we examined what young people desired from a happy society and what elements were necessary for it. In the post-2030 agenda, the sustainable development of the Japanese economy is essential and for this, we identified the three necessary elements of “mental, physical, and global health”, “growth of companies and individuals”, and “domestic and international connections”. Reflecting on the free thinking of young people that is unhindered by preconceived notions and customs as well as the voices of the mature youths who have the achievements and experiences, leads to the creation of new value concepts. On the other hand, the opportunities to exercise discretion and influence are limited, making it necessary to secure and expand places where constituents that represent the opinions of the young generation can take action.

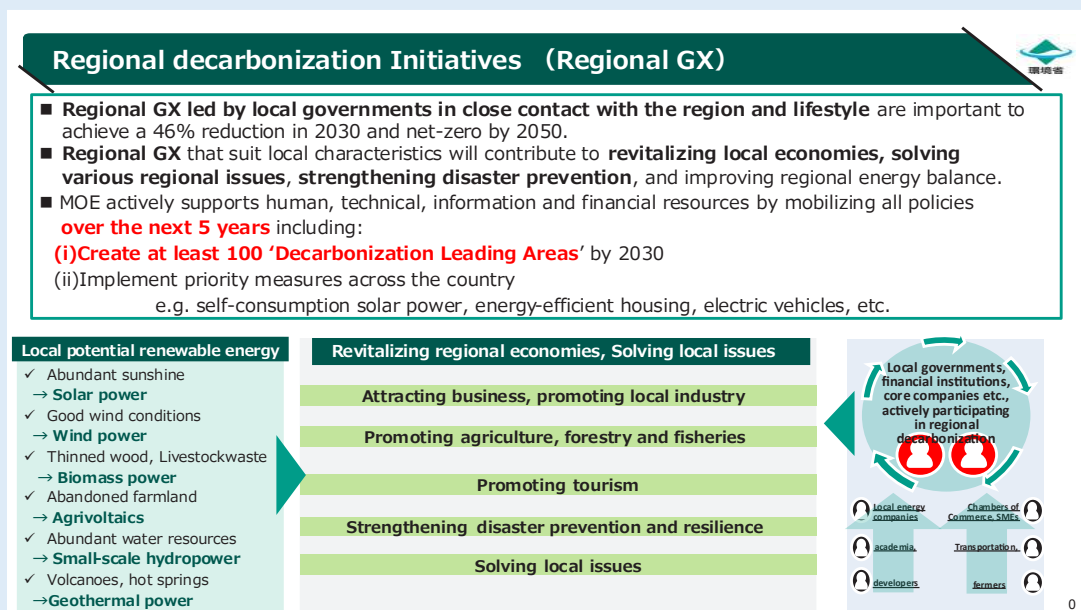
(Gender Mainstreaming and Promoting Women’s Empowerment)

In December 2020, the government approved the Fifth Basic Plan for Gender Equality (the Fifth Basic Plan) at the Cabinet meeting (partial revisions approved by the Cabinet in December 2023). In order to comprehensively and systematically promote measures based on the Basic Act for Gender Equal Society, the “basic recognition” for the period up to the end of FY2030 as well as the “basic direction of measures” and “specific initiatives” for the period up to the end of FY2025 were set forth in the Plan. Since 2015, in order to accelerate women's empowerment, the government has also adopted “the Basic Policy on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women” by around each June, which are reflected in the budget requests of ministries and agencies.

Since 2003, the Government of Japan has set a target of “Expecting to increase the percentage of women in leadership positions to at least 30% by 2020 in all fields in society.” However, the government recognizes that while women’s participation has been progressing in some

Column 8: Regional decarbonization initiatives

The Government of Japan is promoting regionally led decarbonization efforts, driven by local governments closely connected to communities and daily life, as part of its commitment to achieving net-zero emissions by 2050 and a 46% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by fiscal year 2030. Regional decarbonization initiatives that utilize renewable energy sources tailored to local characteristics, such as solar power, wind power, and biomass energy, contribute to solving local issues faced by local governments. These efforts also support regional revitalization and contribute to the achievement of the SDGs. The Government of Japan supports local governments that are working to create sustainable communities by simultaneously promoting decarbonization efforts and addressing local challenges, such as fostering local economic circulation, promoting local industries and agriculture, forestry, and fisheries, enhancing tourism, and strengthening disaster preparedness and resilience, with the aim of enhancing the appeal and quality of the region. This support is provided through a range of policy measures.



PPT: Ministry of the Environment

Focusing on the residential and commercial power sectors, the Ministry of the Environment has designated "Decarbonization Leading Areas," regions aiming to simultaneously achieve decarbonization and address local challenges by fiscal year 2030 without waiting for 2050. To date, 81 proposals from 107 municipalities across 38 prefectures (including 66 cities, 32 towns, and 9 villages) have been selected nationwide, and support is being provided to help these areas achieve their goals. Through these efforts, Japan is setting a course toward decarbonization in a wide range of communities, including rural villages, fishing and mountain areas, remote islands,



Decarbonization and securing the maintenance of regional public transportation
(Photo: Ueda, Nagano prefecture)

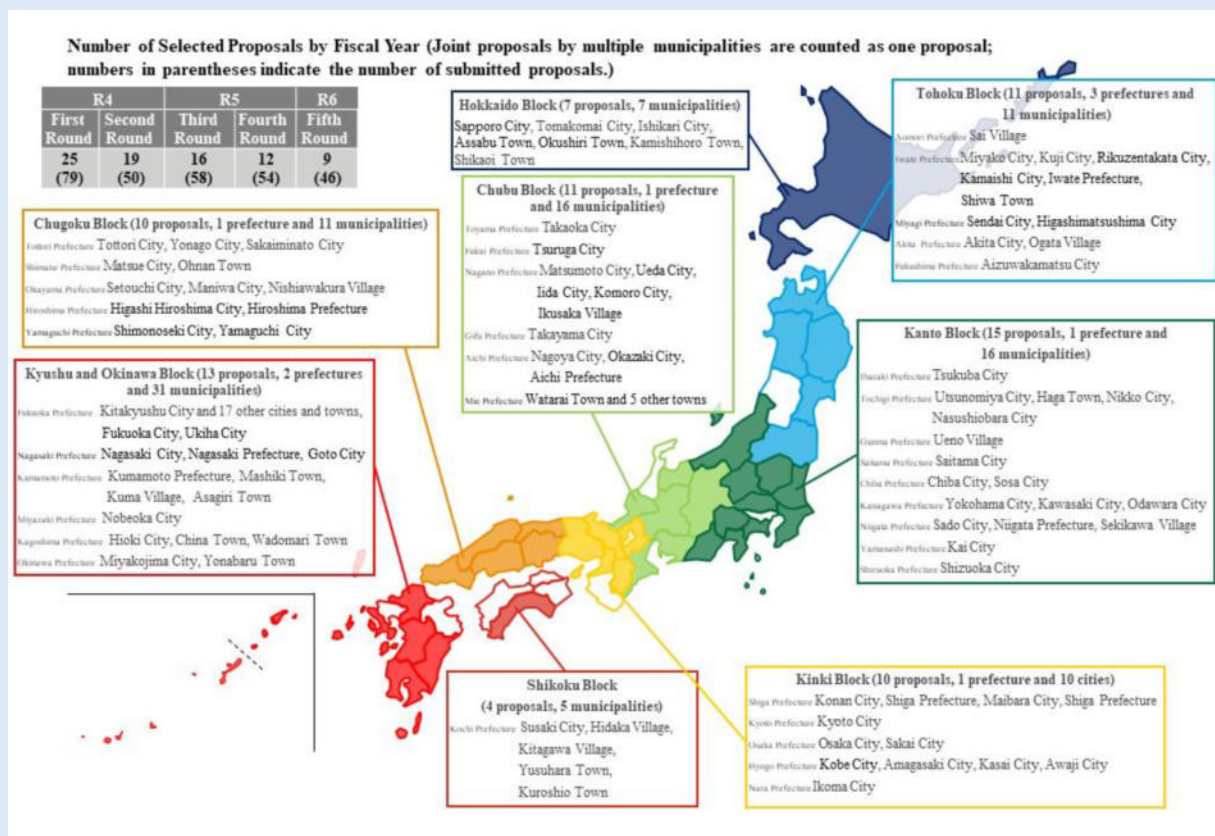


Decarbonization and promoting local tourism
(Photo: Matsue, Shimane prefecture)

and urban neighborhoods, by addressing local challenges and improving residents' quality of life. Under the priority measures acceleration program, the government provides continuous and comprehensive multi-year support to local governments that are implementing advanced measures in a rapid and integrated manner, such as self-consumption solar

power systems and improvements in the energy efficiency of homes and buildings.

Through these efforts, the Government of Japan will continue to build a foundation for decarbonization at the regional level and aims to accelerate and scale up such initiatives nationwide.

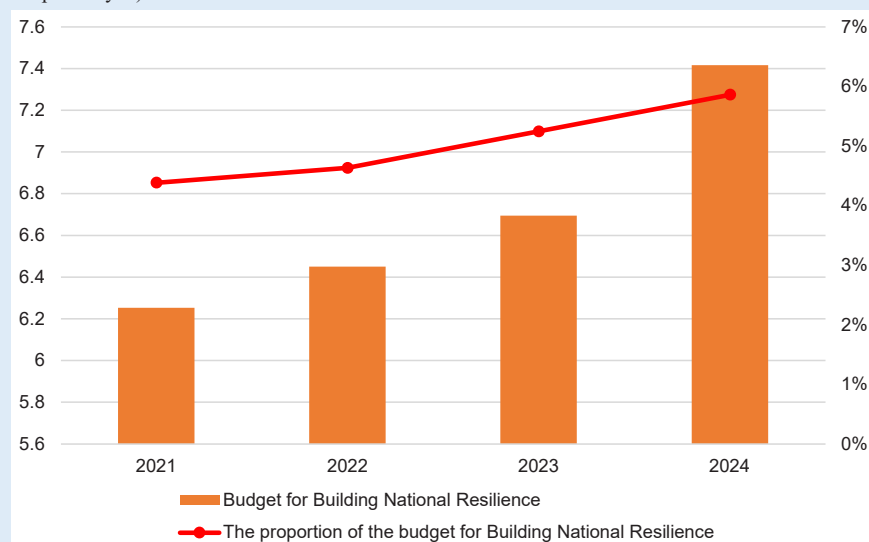


Column 9: Pre-disaster investment for national resilience

Japan has been experiencing increasingly severe and frequent weather-related disasters due to the impacts of climate change, while the risk of large-scale earthquakes such as the Nankai Trough Earthquake is becoming more imminent. The infrastructure developed intensively during Japan's period of rapid economic growth is expected to deteriorate simultaneously in the coming years. Without appropriate measures, this could not only lead to an increased burden, but also pose a risk of dysfunction in the country's socio-economic systems. To address these challenges, Japan is working to further accelerate and deepen efforts in key areas: “measures against increasingly severe wind and flood damage and imminent large-scale earthquakes,” “accelerating responses to aging infrastructure with a shift toward preventive maintenance,” and “promoting digitalization to efficiently implement national resilience measures.” For the five-year period from fiscal 2021 to 2025, Japan has identified the additional scale and other aspects of projects needed and is implementing focused and intensive countermeasures.

From fiscal year 2021 to 2024, Japan secured an annual budget of approximately 6.2 trillion to 7.4 trillion Japanese yen (roughly 53 billion to 59 billion US dollars), allocating about four to six percent of the national budget each year as pre-disaster investment in initiatives that contribute to national resilience. Amid the increasing severity and frequency of disasters, it is essential for the Government of Japan to make a certain level of investment in disaster prevention in order to build a sustainable society.

(trillion Japanese yen)



Budget for Building National Resilience (Material: Based on date from the Cabinet Secretariat and the Ministry of Finance)

Japan is also promoting digitalization as part of its efforts to enhance national resilience. For example, in the 2021 landslide disaster in Atami City, the use of high-resolution elevation data enabled the comparison of elevation differences before and after the disaster, contributing to the early assessment of the damage. Approximately 30 percent of areas across Japan still lack high-resolution elevation data, making early development a pressing issue. To address this, Japan is

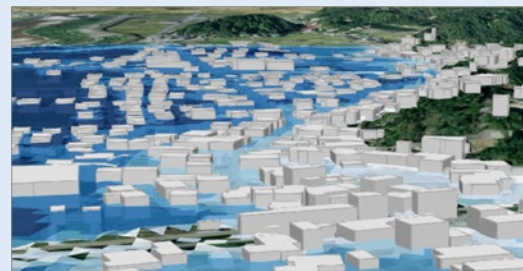
using airborne laser surveying to develop such data. High-resolution elevation data improves the accuracy of simulations for floods and landslides, thereby enhancing pre-disaster preparedness. During disasters, such data enables the precise and rapid identification of inundation areas and landslide occurrences, contributing to faster recovery and reconstruction efforts.



Highly precise elevation data (3D point cloud)
(Photo: Geospatial Information Authority of Japan)



Estimating inundation depth from elevation data
(Photo: Geospatial Information Authority of Japan)



Visualization of flood simulation on a 3D map
(Photo: Geospatial Information Authority of Japan)

(Circular Economy)

Resource circulation contributes not only to achieving net-zero emissions, but also to addressing broader social challenges such as economic security and regional revitalization. For Japan, enhancing the industrial competitiveness of resource circulation by securing both the quality and quantity of recycled materials is essential. Accordingly, the transition to a circular economy is positioned as a key policy priority.

In order to promote decarbonization and resource circulation, particularly securing the quality and quantity of recycled materials, in an integrated manner, Japan enacted the Act Concerning Sophistication of Recycling Business, etc. to Promote Resource Circulation in 2024. Under this law, the Minister of the Environment, has formulated a basic policy, require the reporting and publication of recycling performance by industrial waste disposal operators with large disposal volumes, and establish a certification system for the advancement of recycling-related businesses.

Column 10: Japan's efforts toward a society living in harmony with nature and GREEN×EXPO 2027

In an era when the concept of planetary boundaries is gaining increasing attention, two of the most critical challenges that will significantly affect the future of human life are climate change and the loss of biodiversity. These issues are closely interconnected. Since the adoption of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity in 1992, global efforts have accelerated, leading to the adoption of the Paris Agreement in 2015 and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework in 2022. At present, countries around the world are working toward achieving the targets set for 2030.

Japan has implemented numerous initiatives aimed at realizing a society living in harmony with nature. Among them, a notable example of an internationally recognized effort that incorporates Japan's own knowledge is the SATOYAMA Initiative, which was jointly proposed with the United Nations University at the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP10). The initiative aims to realize a society living in harmony with nature by promoting the international conservation and sustainable use of secondary natural environments through the integration of traditional knowledge and practices rooted in the views of nature and social systems across the world, including Japan, with modern science and technology.

Against this backdrop, the 1990 International Garden and Greenery Exposition in Osaka introduced the concept of “coexistence between humans and nature” to the world two years prior to the adoption of the Conventions in 1992. Furthermore, the 2005 World Exposition in Aichi, under the theme of “Nature's Wisdom,” played a significant role in raising public awareness of the importance of living in harmony with nature. In this way, the international expositions held in Japan have played an important role as forerunners of global dialogue, encouraging action toward the resolution of global challenges.

GREEN × EXPO 2027 (Official name: International Horticultural Expo 2027, Yokohama, Japan, to be held from March 19 to September 26, 2027) adopts the theme “Scenery of the Future for Happiness,” with a commitment to tackling global challenges. In response to global environmental changes such as climate change, Japan seeks to re-evaluate the wisdom and cultural practices rooted in its long-standing relationship with nature, practices that integrate the diverse functions of the natural environment into everyday life. These values are being leveraged to contribute to the formation of a sustainable society. The exposition also aims to promote global horticultural culture, realize a fulfilling lifestyle surrounded by flowers, greenery, and agriculture, and foster a society where happiness is deepened through the participation of diverse stakeholders.

The venue will be the former Kamiseya Communication Facility, an extensive 242-hectare site that was returned by the U.S. military in 2015, with approximately 100 hectares designated as the

exposition area. As this vast land had long been subject to land use restrictions, it retains a rich natural environment, including farmland, grasslands, and valuable natural assets such as river headwaters and distinctive valley landscapes. Development of the venue is being carried out based on Nature-Based Design, making use of its rich natural capital.

The Basic Policy on the Promotion of Measures for the Preparation and Operation of the International Horticultural Expo 2027 (GREEN×EXPO 2027), adopted at Relevant Ministers Meeting on the International Horticultural Expo 2027, identifies contribution to the achievement of the SDGs as one of its fundamental principles. As the exposition will take place three years prior to the SDGs target year of 2030, it is positioned as an opportunity to promote initiatives in fields closely linked to the natural environment, to contribute to the realization of a nature-positive society, a circular economy, green transformation (GX), and a green society, and to share new initiatives by diverse stakeholders with a view toward the post-2030 era. Preparations are underway accordingly.

The Japan Association for the International Horticultural Expo 2027, Yokohama, a public interest incorporated association, the organizer of GREEN×EXPO 2027, has formulated a Sustainability Strategy to deepen its efforts toward sustainability, and is promoting environmental measures through initiatives aimed at realizing green transformation (GX) and a nature-positive society. As one of the initiatives, standardized reusable components will be used in temporary structures such as those for exhibitions within the venue to reduce environmental impact. At the same time, the venue will make use of “GX HOUSE,” a reusable building designed to achieve zero waste throughout its lifecycle, from material procurement, construction, operation, dismantling, and reuse. In addition, preparations are underway to create a new generation of exposition through the “Village” co-creation initiative, which combines a variety of exhibits, experiential programs, and other elements to embody the theme, “Scenery of the Future for Happiness.”



Venue rendering: Main garden

Column 11: International expansion of community-based initiatives based on partnership: Lake Biwa's "UMINOKO" as a model for environmental education in developing countries

Shiga Prefecture, known as a leader in environmental initiatives, has developed a unique environmental education program in which local fifth-grade students board an environmental learning ship called UMINOKO (officially named the Lake Biwa Floating School). Launched in 1983 with the aim of encouraging students to take active ownership in protecting Lake Biwa's environment, the program had reached a cumulative total of approximately 630,000 participants by the end of December 2024, equivalent to more than 40 percent of Shiga Prefecture's population.

In the Lake Biwa Floating School program, students from multiple schools take part in a two-day, one-night voyage, during which they learn and live together with peers from other schools. During the voyage, students take part in recreational activities such as observing the islands of Lake Biwa, participating in walk rallies at port towns, and joining inter-school exchange events. Through these experiences, they learn the importance of helping one another within a group. As part of the environmental learning program, students engage in hands-on activities such as observing plankton, fish, and shellfish, measuring water clarity, and conducting experiments on water purification. The learning content is selectable by each school, and it has evolved over time in response to changing awareness of environmental issues.

All meals provided in the program incorporate locally produced ingredients from Shiga Prefecture, contributing to food and nutrition education for the participating students. Among the meals served, the "UMINOKO Curry," featuring a pork cutlet made from locally raised Shiga pork, is especially memorable. It has become a cherished taste that every student who boards the ship remembers fondly. In addition, the UMINOKO operates using a fuel mixture in which biodiesel fuel (BDF) is blended at a ratio of 1-part BDF to 10 parts conventional fuel. In January 2025, the UMINOKO program received 30 t-CO₂ of Lake Biwa Carbon Credits from The Shiga Bank, enabling it to offset a portion of the greenhouse gas emissions generated during its operations.

The expertise developed through the UMINOKO program is now being utilized in environmental education at Lake Managua, located in the capital city of Managua in Nicaragua, which is the second poorest country in Central America after Haiti.

Lake Managua, which is 1.5 times the size of Lake Biwa, has been undergoing development as a tourism resource, while at the same time suffering from severe water pollution caused by inflows of domestic wastewater and other contaminants. The JICA Nicaragua Office, which had been supporting primary education and other initiatives in the country, sought ways to improve the environmental conditions of Lake Managua. While studying both domestic and international examples, the office took note of Shiga Prefecture's "Lake Biwa Model," a successful case of achieving environmental conservation and restoration, as well as economic development.

In 2020, the JICA Nicaragua Office established the BIWAKO Task Force to address the challenges of environmental conservation in Lake Managua. With support from the Shiga Prefectural Board of Education and personnel involved in the Floating School program, the task force steadily advanced its activities, leading to the launch of a “Nicaraguan UMINOKO” in 2021.

In the Nicaraguan UMINOKO, a boat normally used for tourism is repurposed to offer approximately two hours of experiential learning for fourth- and fifth-grade students. After observing the lake surface, which appeared dirty and brown or green, floating debris, and aquatic organisms using a microscope, they will discuss what can be done to clean Lake Managua's water. For many students, it is their first time boarding a boat, and much like the original UMINOKO program, the experience becomes a lifelong memory shared with classmates, and a step toward nurturing future environmental leaders.

The Nicaraguan version of UMINOKO has been highly praised by both students and teachers who have taken part in the onboard learning experience. It was introduced to the world by Nicaragua’s Minister of Education at the 26th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP26) in 2021.

Ongoing dialogue between Nicaraguan educators and members of the “Lake Biwa Floating School” continues to support the enrichment of the Nicaraguan UMINOKO program, with hopes that it will be implemented in a more sustained and expanded manner in the future.



UMINOKO

Reference: Coco Shiga website <https://cocoshiga.jp/official/topic/uminoko/>

Offset: <https://uminoko.jp/topics/2025/3853/>

Reference: https://uminoko.jp/files/child/NicaraguaUMINOKO_C.pdf