

**Monitoring and Review of SDG 16 Plus
at the National and Regional Level (2015-2020)
in Japan
CSOs perspective**

**Japan Civil Society Network on SDGs
(SDGs Japan)**

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Action against Child Exploitation (ACE)

Africa Japan Forum (AJF)

Japan NGO Network for Education (JNNE)

Japan NGO Center for International Cooperation (JANIC)

Japanese Organization for International Cooperation in Family Planning (JOICFP)

Japan Workers' Co-operative Union (JWCU)

Pacific Asia Resource Center (PARC)

Solidarity Network with Migrants Japan (SMJ)

World Vision Japan (WVJ)

Chapter I. What is Goal 16 Plus in your national context

Globally, Japan has been routinely recognized as a "developed democracy". But in reality, it has many challenges in Goal 16 when compared to international standards.

This is apparent from the fact that the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Japan conducted by the UN Human Rights Council in 2017 made a number of recommendations on the human rights situation in Japan related to Goal 16 (54%).

Many of Japan's human rights and governance problems addressed by Goal 16 stem from a lack of inclusiveness and participation in policy and decision making, and a lack of transparency, openness and accountability in governmental institutions. Policy making in Japan is exclusively dominated by government bureaucrats, with a limited role for the legislature. In addition, civil society, including the parties concerned, has often been excluded from policy making. Most of the human rights violations in Japan committed by government agencies occur in detention and correctional facilities, including police detention facilities, detention houses and prisons, and immigration detention centers, and the lack of transparency and accountability in the disciplinary actions taken against detainees in these facilities has always been a problem.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed Japan's weaknesses regarding Goal 16. The Prime Minister's Office unilaterally decided to close schools and distribute masks to all citizens without sufficient consensus with the ministries. At least some of the procurement of these masks and the provision of subsidies to the private companies was done in an opaque and unaccountable manner. Nevertheless COVID-19 is not sufficiently controlled and suppressed, a subsidized campaign to promote tourism and food and drink was launched without any policy coherence to manage the pandemic. Some medical experts were mobilized for policy making on COVID-19 as advisors, but the participation of experts from other disciplines, civil society and communities have been grossly inadequate.

A follow-up and review process of the progress of Goal 16 in Japan under the name of SDGs16+ needs to develop clear pathways to introduce significant policies and measures to overcome these weaknesses in Japan with regard to Goal 16 and lead to a significant improvement in participatory decision-making and effectiveness, transparency, openness and accountability of government institutions.

Reference:

Universal Periodic Review – Japan (UNHRC, 2017)

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/upr/pages/jpindex.aspx>

Chapter II. Background

Chapter III. Understanding SDG 16 Plus

Violence against children, target 16.2 - Peaceful society

Japanese government has proposed the following indicators against three global indicators for SDG target 16.2 respectively.

16.2.1

- Global indicator
Proportion of children aged 1-17 years who experienced any physical punishment and/or psychological aggression by caregivers in the past month
- Japanese government's indicator
The number of cases provided to by child guidance center for consultation on child abuse in the past year (fiscal year).

16.2.2

- Global indicator
Number of victims of human trafficking per 100,000 population, by sex, age and form of exploitation
- Japanese government's indicator
It is defined as the total number of victims of trafficking in persons detected in Japan.

16.2.3

- Global indicator
The proportion of young women and men aged 18-29 years who experienced sexual violence by age 18
- Japanese government's indicator
Not available

However, these proposed indicators are not sufficient to measure the actual status of as well as the progress of target "end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children.

The Japanese government became a pathfinding country for Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children (GPeVAC) in 2018. As part of this, it has established a multi-stakeholder roundtable and working group to End Violence Against Children, that consist of government, civil society, the private sector, and experts. These roundtable and working group is now developing a National Action Plan to End Violence Against Children. Appropriate indicators will also be discussed at these groups in the future.

Reference:

The Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children (2021)
<https://www.end-violence.org/>

Women's participation and leadership, target 5.5, and Policies and legislation for gender equality, target 5.c - Just society

Public space

- House of Representatives: 9.9%, House of Councillors: 22.9% (as of June 2020)
- Women occupy 11.4% at Prefectural assemblies, 20.5% at Ordinance designated city assemblies, 15.9% at city assemblies. Over 30% of town/village assemblies have zero women members (as of December 2019).
- The proportion of women in the judicial sector has increased steadily. Women occupy 22.2% of judges, 25% of prosecutors, and 18.9% of lawyers (as of December 2018).
- Japan ranks 121st out of 149 countries in the Gender Gap Index (GGI) in 2020.

Private Space

In terms of managerial positions, women occupy 18.9% of Section Chiefs, 11.4% of Directors, and 6.9% of Department Managers in companies. About women executives of listed companies, the percentage is 5.2% (2019). While there is not a large discrepancy in the proportion of women employed between Japan (44.5%) and other countries, the proportion of women in managerial positions in Japan (14.8%) is notably lower than other countries.

Violence against Women

Among spouses, 31.3% of women and 19.9% of men have experienced domestic violence. 13.8% of women and 4.8% of men were subject to domestic violence multiple times. 40% of women and 70% of men consulted no one. The number of consultations with the public centers has remained high at over 100,000 cases a year. 1,591 protection orders were issued under the Act on the Prevention of Spousal Violence and the Protection of Victims (2019).

In 2018, the number of known cases of forced sexual intercourse (1,405) increased year-on-year, while the number of known cases of forcible indecency (4,9000) decreased year-on-year.

In Japan, married couples must have the same surname under the civil code. CEDAW states it is indirect discrimination against women as over 90% of women takes their husband's names. According to public opinion in 2017 (n=2,952), 42.5% of the respondents were in favor of a system that allows couples to have the choice of having separate surnames.

The 2020 survey done by a civil rights campaign group and researchers (n=7,000) suggested that 70.6% of the respondents are in favor of the system change.

Reference:

The Global Gender Gap Report 2020 (the World Economic Forum, 2019)

<https://www.weforum.org/reports/gender-gap-2020-report-100-years-pay-equality>

Promotion of global citizenship, target 4.7 - Inclusive society

Japan should improve two points in education (SDG4) for achieving SDG 16. The first one is to promote Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), target 4.7. Though it is commendable to include learning about SDGs and ESD in the new national curriculum to be started in 2020, there are three major concerns.

- ESD in Japan is narrowly focused on environmental education, which does not cover gender, human rights, equality, inclusiveness, poverty, and justice. In other words, ESD in Japan should integrate citizenship education which allows students to be aware of their rights and responsibilities in society including social participation and freedom of expression.
- The narrow focus of ESD at school education has not transformed school governance. ESD aims at not only empowering citizens but also to transforming society. In case of schools, promotion of ESD will lead to employing whole-school approach, with rules and regulations of schools to be changed, physical environment to be improved more eco-friendly, with measures to be taken to reduce violence and bullying at schools.
- Non-formal education or adult learning and education policy and practices do not give priority on ESD and citizenship education, which does not help youth and adult to be aware of rights and responsibilities in society. This is one of the reasons for racism against foreign residents and migrants in Japan. UNESCO's 7th International Conference on Adult Education in 2022 will be an opportunity to mainstream citizenship education in adult education and learning policy in Japan.

The second one is that Japan should endorse "Safe Schools Declaration", which gives moral responsibilities not to use schools for military purposes and not to attack schools during conflicts. This is essential to ensure target 4.a, "provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments". In spite of the fact that 104 countries have endorsed the Declaration, Japan has not done so.

Reference:

The Safe Schools Declaration

<https://ssd.protectingeducation.org/>

Chapter IV. How SDG 16 Plus encompasses Whole of Society approach or LNOB

Voluntary Local Reviews in Japan

The government of Japan annually nominates local governments that take a lead in advancing SDGs at local levels. As of January 2021, 93 local governments across Japan have been nominated as “SDGs Future Cities Project”, and 30 local governments as “SDGs Model Project at Local Level”. Since this project is led by Cabinet Office in line with “FutureCity Initiative” and “Environmental Future City”, most of them cover topics such as environmental protection, sustainable cities or rural development, and SDG16+ are hardly covered.

Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES) provides an online platform to introduce cities and regions taking a lead on Voluntary Local Reviews (VLR), and 4 of major SDGs Future Cities, Shimokawa Town, Hamamatsu City, Tomaya City and Kitakyushu City have published VLRs in 2018-2019. Though those cities have good examples of generating economic, social, and environmental values, or integrating economic social and environmental policies, only Hamamatsu City has described policies and actions related to SDG16+. According to Hamamatsu City Plan for Human Right Policy Promotion, in order to prevent child abuse and for improved early detection and response, personnel are actively put in place including social workers, clinical therapists, and public health nurses, aiming to expand support based on more expert knowledge and techniques, and as part of measures to provide family care environments for victims of child abuse, the city is raising public awareness on its foster parent system (giving lectures at companies and universities, holding salons and training for foster parents) and providing support to foster parents.

Reference:

Shimokawa Town the Sustainable Development Goals Report (2018)

https://www.iges.or.jp/en/publication_documents/pub/policyreport/en/6571/Shimokawa_SDGsReport_EN_0713.pdf

Toyama City the Sustainable Development Goals Report (2018)

https://www.iges.or.jp/en/publication_documents/pub/policyreport/en/6575/EnglishToyama0726.pdf

Kitakyushu City the Sustainable Development Goals Report (2018)

https://www.iges.or.jp/en/publication_documents/pub/policyreport/en/6569/Kitakyushu_SDGreport_EN_201810.pdf

Hamamatsu Voluntary Local Review Report

<https://www.iges.or.jp/sites/default/files/inline-files/Hamamatsu.pdf>

Stakeholder Conference for Revising the “SDGs Implementation Guiding Principles”

Since 2016, the Government of Japan has established the SDGs Promotion Headquarters, which is chaired by the Prime Minister and consists of all Cabinet members, as an intra-governmental mechanism for implementing the 2030 Agenda. The Headquarters has organized the SDGs Implementation Roundtable (RT) as its advisory body, consisting of individual experts representing diverse stakeholders and representatives of all governmental agencies.

In 2016, the Headquarters formulated the “SDGs Implementation Guiding Principles” as a “national strategy” to achieve the SDGs. Before the first revision of the Guiding Principles was released in 2019, voluntary expert members of the RT (Voluntary RT experts) organized a conference together with the United Nations University (UNU) and in support of the Japan Civil Society Network on SDGs (SDGs-Japan), Keio University (xSDG Lab., Keio Research Institute at SFC) and SDSN Japan. This conference, the “Stakeholder Conference for Revising SDGs Implementation Guiding Principles”, held on 6 September 2019, aimed to collect a wide range of views and opinions from multiple stakeholders and reflect them in recommendations submitted to the government. The conference was attended by 200 participants from across Japan, including CSOs, companies, local governments, labour unions and youth.

The conference discussed a wide range of issues such as perspectives on policies and measures for implementations of the SDGs, and contributions and efforts by each sector to achieve the SDGs.

After the conference, Voluntary RT experts submitted recommendations about roles of various stakeholders such as (a) civil society, (b) private companies, (c) the financial sector, (d) local initiatives, and (e) academic and education institutions. The recommendations also covered cross-cutting issues such as (a) goal-setting, follow-up and review, (b) governance for effective implementation, (c) securing budgets & human resources, and (d) policies and measures for implementations.

Reference:

SDGs Implementation Guiding Principles Revised Version (December 2019)

https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/sdgs/pdf/jisshi_shishin_r011220e.pdf

The process of developing the National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights, and its follow-up mechanism

The Japanese government released the National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights (NAP) on 16 October 2020 after the declaration of developing NAP following the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) in 2016.

In the process of developing the NAP, the Baseline Study Opinion Exchange on Business and Human Rights was established. The Opinion Exchange Meeting was held to review the current status of Japan's legal system and initiatives regarding the protection and implementation of human rights in the business sector.

The meeting was the opportunity for relevant stakeholders to take part in the process of developing the NAP. It consisted of various stakeholders below.

- Business and Human Rights NAP Civil Society Platform
<https://www.bhr-nap-cspf.org/> (Japanese)
- Nippon Keidanren (the largest business association)
<https://www.keidanren.or.jp/en/>
- Japan Trade Union Confederation
<http://www.jtuc-rengo.org/>
- Global Compact Network Japan
<https://www.ungcjin.org/> (Japanese)
- Federation of Bar Associations
<https://www.nichibenren.or.jp/en/>
- International Labor Organization in Japan
<https://www.ilo.org/tokyo/lang--en/index.htm>

The report of the Baseline Study, released by the government in December 2018, includes recommendations from stakeholders about focus points which should be integrated into the NAP. As various sectors had participated in the meeting, recommendations are based on the perspective of the SDG16+.

Keywords of the Recommendations

- Links with the SDGs
- Equality before the Law (Disabled people, LGBT, and Women)
- Labour (Child Labour and Foreign Workers including Technical Internees)
- Access to Remedy
- Human Rights in International Agreements (including Investment Treaties)
- Small and medium-sized enterprises

The Report of the Baseline Study on Business and Human Rights (Executive Summary), December 2018
<https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000455152.pdf>

During the process, all engaged stakeholders, regardless of their original background, reached an agreement on submitting letters of requests based on common interests to the government. The first letter emphasized essential points, such as Foreign workers, Due diligence and Non-financial report, to practice the principles of the Business and Human Rights in November 2019, then the second followed in June 2020.

“Stakeholder Common Request” and the Letter of Request (November 2019)
https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-tokyo/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_735159.pdf

“Stakeholder Common Request” and the Letter of Request (June 2020)
https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-tokyo/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_746899.pdf

After releasing the NAP in October 2020, stakeholders released the Joint Comments.

Stakeholder Joint Comments
https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-tokyo/documents/statement/wcms_760382.pdf

Feedback from CSOs

The process of developing the NAP was mainly led by the ministry of foreign affairs (MoFA). While the Opinion Exchange Meeting consisted of various stakeholders, there were only limited opportunities to reflect their opinions. The process was not actively involved victims of business-related human rights abuses.

In October 2020, CSOs commended on the NAP and its implementations.

- Ensure policy coherence through all relevant ministries, agencies, and local governments by raising awareness of and knowledge about business and human rights issues among representatives of those bodies
- Ensure a strong government commitment to address adverse human rights impacts
- Take full account of the views of vulnerable or marginalized individuals and groups, based on the principles of non-discrimination and equality
- Include the necessity of a national human rights institution and a concrete roadmap towards its establishment, in full conformity with the UN Paris Principles

Everything depends on future efforts: Comments from civil society on the release of the NAP
http://www.bhr-nap-cspf.net/bhrnap_statement_civilsocietyjp_10162020.pdf

* The NAP is currently available only in Japanese.
<https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/100104121.pdf>

Chapter V. How SDG 16+ is instrumental in protecting fundamental freedoms in your country

Safe migration, target 10.7 – Peace society

According to the Statistics on Foreign National Residents, there were 2,933,137 foreign nationals (2.3% of the total population) living in Japan at the end of 2019, with Permanent Residents composing the largest group at 793,000, followed by Technical Intern Trainees at 411,000, Students at 345,791, and Special Permanent Resident, who are from Japan's former colonies including Ethnic Korean residents at 312,501.

Despite the fact that there are many migrants living in Japan and that the government is going to accept more foreign workers, the government has insisted that it would not adopt the 'immigration policy'. Meanwhile, the Analytical Report of Foreign Residents Survey, the first official survey conducted by the Ministry of Justice in 2016, indicates that for the past five years 40 percent of respondents had experienced discrimination when seeking to rent housing, 25 percent had experienced discrimination in employment and 30 percent had experienced personal contempt. The survey clearly demonstrates the prevalence of serious discrimination against foreign residents threatening their life and safety and the disfunction of existing laws and regulations.

Discrimination also exists in the public sphere. Foreign nationals are not eligible to be public officials at the national level. At the local level, many local governments have a nationality clause to exclude foreign nationals in their employment practices. If not, those local governments that employ foreign nationals still do not permit them to be promoted to managerial positions. In addition, they do not have even local suffrage.

In the education sector, foreign schools or ethnic schools are not recognized as regular schools, and among them, the Government strictly keeps its position to exclude Korean schools from any public assistance.

When it comes to migrant workers, the Technical Intern Training Program (TITP), in particular, has been causing massive human rights abuses against Technical Intern Trainees from developing countries, TITP was established in 1993 with the objective of the transfer of technical skills to developing countries, but a short-term labour rotation system in reality. In the past three decades, the Technical Intern Trainees have been facing poor working conditions, including low pay, unpaid wages, unjust deductions for rent and utilities. They have no freedom to change jobs, exorbitant debt, and forced return. They have to endure verbal abuses and power harassment by their employers. Female Intern Trainees sometimes face sexual harassment, sexual violence and prohibition of pregnancies.

Considering such a situation, the government should immediately adopt a comprehensive anti-discrimination legislature, and establish an independent institution to provide an accessible remedy to victims of discrimination, in line with the principles of SDGs. In order to protect the rights of migrant workers, the government must accede to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, adopted by the UN in 1990.

Modern slavery, target 8.7 – Peace society

ILO (2017) estimates the number of child labourers in high-income countries as two million out of the 152 million worldwide. Child labour does exist in Japan, as suggested by the number of enterprises which violated the Labour Standards Act for minors (226 in 2018 according to MHLW) and the number of victims of child pornography, child prostitution and human trafficking (3,357 in 2018 according to NPA), which are considered to be worst forms of child labour.

Cases of the worst forms of child labour have been reported by the media, such as the death of a fifteen-year-old girl who fell 43 feet to the concrete below when she was cleaning solar panels on a factory rooftop, and forced prostitution involving runaway girls who were confined in an apartment by criminals.

There are an estimated 231,110 working children above the minimum age for work (junior high school leavers, high school dropouts and high school students) in Japan (ACE, 2019). According to a survey conducted by the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare (2016), 32.6% of working high school students said that they had experienced some form of trouble with employers. They reported long working hours without breaks, night work, wages below the minimum wage, and fines imposed for absences and deducted from their salary.

However, such information is sporadic. There is neither official data available on child labour in Japan, nor a government department dedicated exclusively to child labour. On the government website which reports on progress towards global SDG Indicators, “Not available” is shown for the proportion and number of children aged 5-17 years engaged in child labour, by sex and age. Although the government’s Action Plan on SDGs includes a commitment to tackling child labour as one of its priority areas – Peace, Security and Safe Society, the target only relates to developing countries.

It is necessary for the government to formulate a national action plan on the elimination of child labour, and take immediate and concrete action. CSOs (working against child labour and violence against children), in collaboration with trade unions, continue to advocate the government to address child labour in Japan by submitting public comments on policies and action plans and by organizing meetings with policymakers and government officials.

Reference:

ACE (2019) Child Labour Exists in Japan: Its Forms and Cases.

ILO (2017) Global Estimates of Child Labour: Results and Trends, 2012-2016. Geneva, ILO.

Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) (2016) Kokosei ni-taisuru Arubaito ni-kansuru Ishiki-to Chosa [Survey on High School Students' Part-time Work].

——— (2018) Rodo-kijun-kantoku-nempo [Annual Report on Labour Inspection].

National Police Agency (NPA) (2018a) Shonen-hiko, Jido-gyakutai oyobi Jido no Seiteki-sakushu-to no Jokyo [The status of delinquency, child abuse, and child sexual exploitation].

——— (2018b) Jinshin-torihiki-jihan no Kenkyo-Jokyo [The status of human trafficking].

Social, economic, and political inclusion, target 10.2 – Inclusion society

In 2017, Japan's Gini coefficient (a measure of income inequality among countries) was 0.5594 for initial income and 0.3721 for redistributed income. This indicates that Japan is one of the OECD countries with the highest inequality, similar to the United States and the United Kingdom. In particular, the income gap is widening among single-parent households headed by women, households headed by the elderly, and young people who work part-time or irregular jobs because they cannot find full-time employment after graduating from university.

Another major issue in Japan is that the average income of people living in rural areas continues to decline relative to that of urban areas due to changes in the industrial structure and the concentration in Tokyo. For example, a comparison of annual per capita income by prefecture shows that Tokyo, the highest, had 4,512,000 yen as of 2014, while Okinawa, the lowest, had 2,129,000 yen, a difference of more than double.

These income and regional disparities have also led to disparities in education, medical care, and health, which should be provided fairly to all citizens. For example, children from low-income households do not have access to satisfactory out-of-school education, and as a result, there is a disparity in college enrolment rates. In large cities with large populations, there are many medical institutions and doctors, but in depopulated and sparsely populated areas, there are very few. As a result, residents have to go to distant medical institutions to receive treatment. According to the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare National Health and Nutrition Survey, the obesity rate in Japan was 23.3% for men and 20.3% for women in 1997, but in 2017, the rate was 30.7% for men and 21.9% for women. This is believed to be because the diets of low-income people are too heavily weighted toward carbohydrate meals that are cheap and easy to fill up.

In 2019, Japan's Gender Gap Index (which quantifies gender inequality over the course of a year in 14 categories, including social and cultural prejudice, employment between men and women, and the wage gap) was the lowest among the G7 countries and ranked 121st out of 153 countries worldwide

(compared to 110th in 2018). It ranks 121st among 153 countries in the world (110th in 2018). Even more, the field of politics is lagging behind higher education and employment in closing the gender gap as the ratio of male to female members of the Diet and the ratio of female ministers to male ministers rank 135th and 139th, respectively, the lowest in the world.

In order to improve these issues, it is important, for example, to have not only positive corrective policies to eliminate discrimination but also to thoroughly implement "decent work" and equal value for equal work, which are guaranteed internationally. Not only the government but also companies and communities need to address this issue. The role of education and the media will also play an important role in changing the values that perpetuate and promote discrimination and inequality.

Chapter VI. 5 examples of Goal 16 plus progress or lack of progress in your country

The law on Worker Cooperatives

The Law on Worker Cooperatives was adopted in the National Diet of Japan on December 4th 2020. The law clearly defines worker cooperatives as “the organizations of which the fundamental principle is that the members make capital contributions to them, and their businesses are conducted by reflecting the opinions of the members, and that the members themselves are engaged in their businesses”.

It also prescribes that the purpose of worker cooperatives is to “promote the creation of diverse employment opportunities”, and to “promote the implementation of businesses to meet diverse demands in local communities”, and eventually to contribute to “the realization of sustainable and vibrant communities.” This law provides legal basis for worker cooperatives in Japan, which have developed their movements and businesses for more than 40 years without a law. It allows vulnerable people such as the elderly, people with disabilities, youth with social difficulties and particularly migrant workers to create their own working places (worker cooperatives) by making capital contributions to them, and to be engaged in the businesses under the protection of their rights, and to further manage the worker cooperatives democratically on the basis of the cooperative principle of “one member, one vote” for the ultimate purpose of contributing to “the realization of sustainable and vibrant communities”.

Threats on access to information

Access to information, including media freedom, is one of the basic human rights threatened by the Government of Japan these days.

Although there is no obvious arbitrary detention of journalists in Japan, in February 2016, Sanae Takaichi, then Minister of Internal Affairs and Communications, said "if a broadcaster repeatedly broadcasts without political impartiality and does not improve at all even after administrative guidance, we cannot promise not to take any action against it," referring to the possibility of the government ordering the broadcaster to suspend radio waves under Article 76 of the Radio Law for violating Article 4 of the Broadcasting Law.

A researcher conducted a survey on the trend of Cabinet members and government bureaucrats refusing to answer questions from opposition parties in recent years. Refusing to answer counted more

than 300 times annually during the final five years of the Abe administration, by far more than any other administration. The count topped 500 a year between 2017 and 2019.

Besides those tough situations, the Government of Japan often refuses to reveal information when citizens officially request to disclose. When a journalist asked the government to publish all the documents, including electronic information, exchanged between the Central Readiness Group Command and the South Sudanese Deployment Facility Unit during the period of from 6 to 15 July 2016, the government released only one-page report, and the daily reports of Self-Defense Forces were not disclosed. It was later discovered that the electronic data had been stored.

In March 2018, the Ministry of Finance was found to have falsified official documents, with regards to selling off a state-owned land at a discount of JYP 800 million (about USD 7,440,000) to Moritomo Gakuen, a school corporation seeking to establish an elementary school in Osaka.

Reference:

“Refusal to answer questions in Diet soared in Abe government”, The Asahi Shimbun, 9 Nov 2020
<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/13914017>

“Narrative Report on the State of National Implementation of SDGs: Focus on SDG 16”, Japan NGO Center for International Cooperation, 2020
https://www.janic.org/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2020/12/Narrative-Report-on-the-State-of-National-Implementation-of-SDGs-Focus-on-SDG-16-Japan_web.pdf

The lack of progress in gender justice

Regarding the target 5.5 of SDGs plus that is on women’s participation in decision making and women in leadership, Japan is far behind from the global standard. Japan ranks the 121st among 153 countries according to the Global Gender Gap Report 2020 of the World Economic Forum. Among the four indexes on health, education, economy and politics in the Report, the politics shows the poorest achievement. Little effort, however, has been made to increase women in leadership positions.

The Act on Promotion of Gender Equality in the Political Field enacted in 2018 only requests political parties to have as equal numbers of male and female candidates as possible. No enforcement measures are stipulated in the Act. In addition, the target year which was to have achieved 30% of women in decision making and leadership positions, was withdrawn and instead changed to be “at the earliest time in the 2020s” in the Fifth Gender Equality Action Plan 2021-2025. This lack of political will indicates that the pathway to achieving gender justice is still far away in Japan.

Hate Speech Act

Hate Speech Act was enacted on 25 May 2016 by Japan's National Diet. The act was passed in order to comply with United Nations International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which was based on the principles of the dignity and equality inherent in all human beings and adopted in 1965. Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Centre, a non-profit organization that aims to promote human rights in the Asia-Pacific through collection and dissemination of information on, about and for human rights, describes that the words "unfair discriminatory speech and behaviour against persons originating from outside Japan" of the new act are considered to be equivalent to what is known as "hate speech" as indicated in the website of Japan's Ministry of Justice 87. However, the act lacks provisions to ban or punish the use of discriminatory languages. Meanwhile, some municipalities passed ordinances to regulate hate speech. Kawasaki City, one of those municipalities, asked Twitter to delete posts defined as hate speech. An ethnic Korean woman living in Kawasaki has long campaigned against hate speech that targets minorities, is also targeted and told to leave the city and Japan, according to the Asahi Shimbun.

Reference:

In a first, Kawasaki to ask Twitter to delete two racist posts (October 10, 2020)

<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/13806104>

Transparency and public participation in the national budget process

The Open Budget Survey (OBS) is a research instrument that uses internationally accepted criteria to evaluate public access to central government budget information; formal opportunities for public participation in the national budget process; and the role of legislature and auditor institutions on the budget process.

Japan was scored 62 out of 100 in Transparency and 20 out of 100 in Public Participation in the 2019 report. Both scores are above the global average but below the OECD average. The score of Transparency was the worst in all G7 countries. Some of recommendations from the OBS are below.

- Include in the Year-End Report comparisons on expected and actual outcomes of performance indicators for outputs and results.
- Actively engage with vulnerable and underrepresented communities directly or through civil society organizations representing them.
- Allow any member of the public or any civil society organization to testify during its hearings on the budget proposal prior to its approval.
- Ensure audit processes are reviewed by an independent agency.

The Access-Info Clearinghouse Japan, a CSO in Japan, published a provisional translated document of the press release of the OBS 2019 and introduced Japanese scores explaining its methodology and recommendations on their website.

Reference:

Open Budget Survey 2019 Japan (The Open Budget Survey, 2021)

<https://www.internationalbudget.org/open-budget-survey/country-results/2019/japan>

Open Budget Survey 2019, 7th edition, Executive Summary (The Open Budget Survey, 2021)

https://www.internationalbudget.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/2019_Executive_Summary_EN.pdf

The Access-Info Clearinghouse Japan

<https://clearing-house.org/?p=3679<Japanese>>

Chapter VII. Engagement and Roles of Parliamentarians in national SDGs mechanism and Review process

The SDGs Implementation Guiding Principles, revised in December 2019 by the Japanese government, describes the role of Parliamentarians in achieving SDGs as below;

“As stated in the 2030 Agenda, members of the Diet are deemed to play an integral role from the perspective of effective implementation and accountability. In order to realise a society where “no one will be 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 voices are reflected in national and local government policies. Moreover, parliaments are expected to cooperate with administrative agencies, civil society, and international organisations and propose concrete policy options to solve social issues we face at both national and regional level.”

Reference:

The SDGs Implementation Guiding Principles (Revised in Dec 2019)
https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/sdgs/pdf/jisshi_shishin_r011220e.pdf

Parliament system

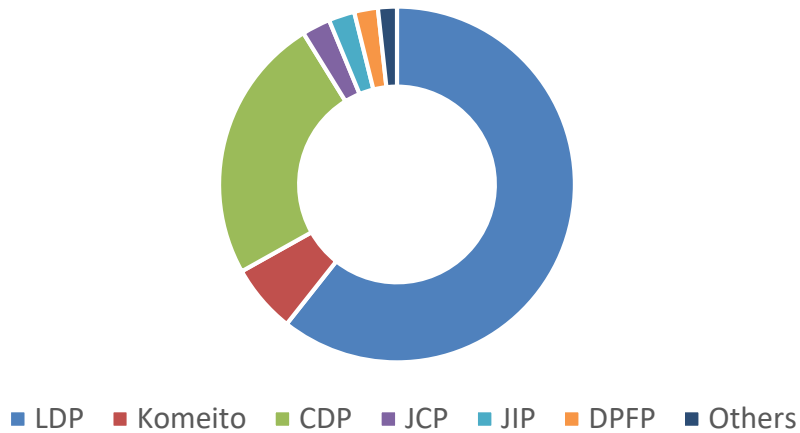
Japan has a bicameral system with the House of Representatives and the House of Councillors. In the beginning of January 2021, Ruling coalition parties, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the Komeito, hold 311 seats accounting for 67% of the 465 seats in the House of Representatives, while they hold 142 seats accounting for 58% of the 245 seats in the House of Councillors.

Figure 1. Major political parties in Japan.

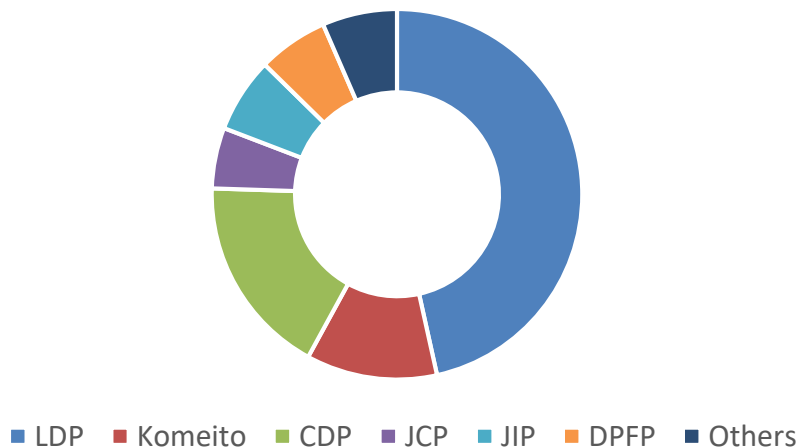
Name	Status
Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)	Ruling party
Komeito	Ruling coalition party
Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan (CDP)	Opposition
Japanese Communist Party (JCP)	Opposition
Japan Innovation Party (JIP)	Opposition
Democratic Party For the People (DPFP)	Opposition

Graph 1. The proportion of the number of seats held by each Party.

The House of Representatives (Total: 465)



The House of Councillors (Total: 245)



Since 2000, the LDP had lost their power only for three years, from 2009 to 2012, and it has led to concentration of power to the ruling party and weakening political capacity of others. As a result, money scandals, corruption, and abuse of power are becoming considerable issues in Japan.

The Japan Civil Society Network on SDGs has suggested main political parties and parliamentarians to discuss about social sustainability and the “leaving no one behind” principle in parliaments and implement SDG-based policies.

According to the minutes of parliaments for 2021, the term, “SDGs”, was mentioned 272 times on interpellations in plenary sessions and several committees. Some questions are achievements of advocacy by CSOs. Examples of interpellation topics particularly related to SDGs16+ are below.

Figure 2. Examples of interpellation related to SDG16+ in 2020.

Committee	Topic
Committee on Cabinet	Gender equality
Committee on Health, Labor and Welfare	SDG 8.7 (domestic child labor)
Committee on Economy, Trade and Industry	Decent work and appropriate technology
Committee on Judicial Affairs	UN Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice 2021 in Kyoto, Japan
Committee on Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries	Illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing
Committee on Foreign Affairs	NAP on Business and Human Rights

Resource:

National Diet Library (<https://kokkai.ndl.go.jp/#/>, January 2021)

SDGs discussions in Political parties

To enforce SDGs implementation, some political parties have established a committee to discuss SDGs in these few years. For example, LDP, Komeito, CDP, and JCP have set frameworks, called the SDGs Parliamentary Group under the Foreign Affairs Division, the SDGs Promotion Headquarters, the SDGs Working Team, and The SDGs Project Team, respectively. The SDGs Japan organized meetings with all of them in 2020 and required taking SDG-based measures to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic and eradicate poverty and social inequality.

Statement:

Now is the time to take measures based on the principles of the SDGs (SDGs Japan, March 2020)

https://918e59d6-07d0-49f8-a75d-62b41ffe7d11.filesusr.com/ugd/d7b557_12e855732880442c8d52749c9bb1435d.pdf

To deal with a challenging situation surrounded by the corona pandemic and other social issues, the role of Parliamentarians has been becoming more important. While it is required to enact laws which

strengthen social security scheme promptly, it is also necessary that these laws are well-discussed and developed in an SDG16-based process with transparency and accountability.

CSOs have been sharing information, raising challenges and issues, and recommending solutions to Parliaments in order to implement integrated policies on a national scale.

Court Cases in Japan

There have also been court cases demanding amendments to Article 750 of the civil code that forces individuals in a marriage to use either one of the spouses' family name. The 2015 Supreme Court ruled this provision to be constitutional as it treats both sexes equally. However, in practice, over 95% of Japanese women end up adopting their husband's name. CEDAW and other human rights treaty bodies have requested Japan to reconsider this amendment. The Fifth Gender Equality Plan failed to include provisions to change the civil code that would allow married couples to have separate surnames despite many public comments, especially from youth demanding this change. This is largely because conservative factions within the ruling party have been strongly opposed to this change, which continues to disappoint many women. In 2021, a new decision on this issue is expected to come out from the Supreme Court.

In 2017, the rape clause in the criminal code was amended for the first time in 110 years, which extends protection to cover male victims and allows police to indict without having a formal complaint from victims. However, more amendments were anticipated. The study group for the amendment within the Ministry of Justice included a representative of a survivors' organization and discussed possible amendments. The amendment is expected to be set in 2021, however, there is a strong concern that important amendments such as the criminalization of sex without consent, and the raising of the current age of consent (13 years old) may not be included.

Gender equality in Parliaments

According to Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), while the global percentage of women members in single and lower houses of parliament reached 25% in 2020, that in Japan was only 9.9%. Although it has increased from 2.7% in 1995, the progress in gender-equal in Parliaments has not been adequate and far behind from a global movement.

(The sex ratio in Japan was 94.8 (males per 100 females) in December 2020.)

In 2003, the Japanese government set a target, which the percentage of women in a leadership position in society reach 30% by 2030. However, in 2020, the government announced abandonment of the target as it would assumably be unachievable with slow progress tracked in these years.

One of the arguable obstacles in achieving the target would be a male-dominated system in Japanese society. The existence and issue of gender inequality in Japan have been also pointed out in the Gender Gap Index, published by the World Economic Forum in 2019 (the rank of Japan was 121st out of 153 countries).

Reference:

Global and regional averages of women in national parliaments (IPU, 2021)

<https://data.ipu.org/women-averages?month=10&year=2020>

Women in parliament: 1995-2020 – 25 years in review (IPU, 2020)

<https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/reports/2020-03/women-in-parliament-1995-2020-25-years-in-review>

Age structure in Parliaments

Another issue in Japanese Parliaments could be the age-structure bias in Parliaments. The average age of the House of Representatives and the House of Councillors was 54.7 and 54.4 years old, respectively, at the last election. As both ages are obviously higher than the median age of 48.4 in Japan in 2021,

Information

- The voting age in Japan has been lowered from 20 years old to 18 since July 2016.
- The legal age of adulthood in Japan will be lowered from 20 years old to 18 in 2022 (passed in Parliaments in 2016).

Hence, it is controversial that the Parliamentarians reasonably represent a wide range of age and gender groups in Japan. To achieve the inclusive, just and peaceful society, Parliaments in Japan need to include diversity.

Reference:

Demographics in Japan (Worldometer, 2021)

<https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/japan-population/#:~:text=The%20median%20age%20in%20Japan%20is%2048.4%20years.>

Statistics Bureau of Japan

<https://www.stat.go.jp/english/index.html>

Chapter VIII. Role of CSOs in implementation, progress, Monitoring and Review of Goal 16 Plus in your country

Monitoring and recommendations on national SDG implementations

The SDGs Japan has annually published policy recommendations, “SDGs Bottom-Up Action Plan”, as a Japanese civil society’s answer to SDGs Action Plan, which has announced also annually by the Japanese government. The SDGs Bottom-Up Action Plan supplements the national plan from a “bottom-up” perspective of civil society to jointly facilitate progress toward SDGs achievement. In the version of 2020, it includes more than 180 recommendations from CSOs and submitted to the national SDGs Promotion Roundtable Meeting.



The recommendations follow basic principles of “sustainable society”, “leaving no one behind” and “reaching the furthest behind fast”. They are accumulated voices from CSOs in Japan. SDG 16 targets, especially about governance, transparency, and participatory decision-making are necessary for assessing the justice of the government.

Reference:

SDGs Bottom-Up Action Plan 2020 (SDGs Japan, 2020)

https://918e59d6-07d0-49f8-a75d-62b41ffe7d11.filesusr.com/ugd/d7b557_4af618c6d28b4b79bc4e0204a6a12b89.pdf

*English version represents only a part of the original recommendations.

Social transformation and value change - case studies starting with civil society

Japanese CSOs have highlighted that "SDGs as a guiding principle in this pandemic" and raised the importance of governance (openness, transparency, democratic procedures and partnership) and economic and social inclusion in policy-making. As of June, Japan's two supplementary budgets have included more than US\$540 billion in total for COVID-19 countermeasures. These budgets should be distributed in an equal and fair manner, under appropriate governance. In addition, the members of expert committees, which make policy proposals, must come from a wide range of sectors, and the various policies must be consistent with the SDGs philosophy. Also, it is important that these policies are open to the public and subject to a verification process in accordance with SDG 16.

Some movements for social transformation have begun to address emerged challenges under the COVID pandemic. Here are some notable examples of the implementation of the "leaving no one behind" principle, in which Japanese civil society is deeply involved.

- In order to support people who are facing unemployment and deprivation, or who are beyond the reach of the public support system, CSOs have begun to hold counselling meetings and provide food and shelter in various regions. By providing more options for support, we are strengthening the safety net for a diverse range of people in need.
- Local SDG roundtable committees have been established to ensure that all residents, including essential workers, can live safely and securely. Some local governments have published proposals for COVID-19 countermeasures based on the SDGs, which are also used as guidelines for reconstruction in the areas affected by the torrential rains of July 2020.
- In Japan, CSOs are increasingly reaching out to companies and investors to address environmental issues and climate change. In some cases, CSOs have made shareholder proposals to help companies address climate risks, leading to inclusive social, economic and environmental change.

Reference:

SDGs and the COVID-19 Pandemic: Recommendations and the role of civil society (12 August 2020)
https://918e59d6-07d0-49f8-a75d-62b41ffe7d11.filesusr.com/ugd/d7b557_022886e192c243fa8ff4839ec08965dc.pdf

Suicides in Japan

In October 2020, the number of suicides in Japan increased significantly from 1,539 in the last year to 2,199. It is presumable that one of the main reasons of the increase would be deteriorations in the quality of life and changes in social environment caused by the pandemic. One significance is the difference in the rate of change between male and female. The number of suicides of female increased by 82.8% from the same month last year, compared to 16.6% for male. Gender gaps, such as the high percentage of female in informal employment and essential work, and gender bias, seem to have affected to these skewed data.

Figure 3. The number of suicides in Japan in October 2020.

Reference:

The National Police Agency <https://www.npa.go.jp/safetylife/seianki/jisatsu/R02/zantei0211.pdf>

Chapter IX. Concrete Recommendations

The Japanese government

Collaborate with stakeholders to make national-level principles, action plans, and review reports

The government of Japan needs to periodically report the progress of SDG measures on international forums, such as UN High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) and UNESCAP Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD). In such reports, it is essential to publish relevant data in accordance with the guidance of the UN Statistical Commission or recommendations from stakeholders. Setting clear criteria to evaluate if measures are on a track to achieve targets is also important.

Refer to the “SDGs Bottom-Up Action Plan” for national policy-making

As mentioned in the Chapter VIII, the SDGs Japan has annually published policy recommendations, “SDGs Bottom-Up Action Plan”. The SDGs Bottom-Up Action Plan supplements the national plan from a “bottom-up” perspective of civil society to jointly facilitate progress toward SDGs achievement. In the version of 2020, it includes more than 180 recommendations from CSOs. The recommendations follow basic principles of “sustainable society”, “leaving no one behind” and “reaching the furthest behind fast”. They are accumulated voices from CSOs in Japan. SDG 16 targets, especially about governance, transparency, and participatory decision-making are necessary for assessing the justice of the government.

Reference:

SDGs Bottom-Up Action Plan 2020 (SDGs Japan, 2020)

https://918e59d6-07d0-49f8-a75d-62b41ffe7d11.filesusr.com/ugd/d7b557_4af618c6d28b4b79bc4e0204a6a12b89.pdf

Apply SDGs-centered measures for leaving no one behind

“Transforming our world into a sustainable society free of poverty, leaving no one behind”

This is the philosophy underlying the SDGs, the global guidelines adopted by the United Nations in 2015. We, the Civil Society Network on SDGs (SDGs Japan), aim to achieve the SDGs through the inclusion of diverse stakeholders from the perspective of civil society. In the midst of the pandemic that has transformed our society, “SDGs-centered measures” are necessary to achieve the principle, “leaving no one behind”.

Reference:

SDGs and the COVID-19 Pandemic

Recommendations and the role of civil society (August 12, 2020)

https://918e59d6-07d0-49f8-a75d-62b41ffe7d11.filesusr.com/ugd/d7b557_022886e192c243fa8ff4839ec08965dc.pdf

SDGs and the COVID-19 Pandemic

Civil Society Practices toward “Resilient Societies” (October 21, 2020)

https://d7b557ca-e496-4292-be6d-a6bfb1e38152.usrfiles.com/ugd/d7b557_1832a8d2d0cb4b23a55f5df63870f0ae.pdf

Other recommendations

- The governments must safeguard to eliminate discrimination, prejudice, and misinformation related to COVID-19, and to ensure that all rights, including human rights.
- The Japanese government should establish independent national human rights institutions to strengthen and protect the human rights, complying with the Paris Principles, as recommended by UN human rights committees.
- The governments should establish independent human rights institutions, which are based on universal human rights norms and standards, in accordance with the Paris Principles.
- The government of Japan should hold regular consultations on the implementation of SDG 16, in line with multi-stakeholder dialogues at the SDGs Promotion Roundtable. The minutes for those consultations should be published.
- In order to promote SDG16+, the government should become a member of the Pathfinders, a group of 36 UN member states, international organizations, global partnerships, civil society and the private sector for peaceful, just and inclusive societies, and translate key documents into the Japanese language.

Reference:

Narrative Report on the State of National Implementation of SDGs: Focus on SDG 16 (JANIC, 2020)

https://www.janic.org/blog/2020/11/27/sdg16_report/

Regional institutions

Marginalized people or groups such as women, people with disabilities, elderly, youth, and migrants are often suffered from the violation of human rights. Issues are largely due to the vulnerability resulting from discrimination, social obstacles, and the lack of access to policy-making.

- Improve human rights for marginalized people
- Expand and institutionalize space for CSOs and people under vulnerable situations to be engaged in decision-making process
- Refine current laws and policies to effectively eradicate gender-based Violence
- Ensure equal access to education for all

There is a case of having not an integrated follow-up system for the SDGs on a national level, and a weak multi-stakeholder engagement mechanism for inclusive and integrated societies. In some countries, the SDGs was one of the national strategies for promoting “export-oriented” economic growth in science and technology fields ignoring human rights. Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, exploitation of freedom of expression, hence, anonymous defamation, is at stake due to the absence of technology ethics.

Understanding these current circumstances, we demand all stakeholders to establish a comprehensive policy coordination system for SDGs implementation with a multi-stakeholder engagement mechanism at a regional level.

Reference:

The Statement of North East Asian Civil Society 2020 (November 4, 2020)

https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/The%20Statement%20of%20North%20East%20Asian%20Civil%20Society%202020_Summary.pdf

Global institutions

In order to achieve SDG 16+, it is important to involve various stakeholders in the preparation of national-level guiding principles, action plans, and follow-up reports, as well as increasing the transparency of the policy-making process. CSOs have proposed that the role of third-party committees composed of diverse stakeholders, including CSOs and marginalized people, should be strengthened.

Awareness of the importance of stakeholder engagement on VNR preparation

As many countries challenge in integrating global SDG indicators into national monitoring systems and in meeting the full data needs by 2030, they need to develop national indicators to improve SDG data coverage through proxy indicators or alternative data which are available in each country. It is also recognized that not all the multiple aspects of targets are addressed by the global indicators and that countries should complement the global indicators with additional nationally relevant indicators.

To enforce SDG implementations meeting regional, national, or local demands, follow-up processes and sharing information globally are needed.

Also, Analysing gaps and achievement on SDG16+ should be evidence-based. It is important to invest in the inclusive measurement systems that lead on effective implementation, as well as annual revision scheme of global indicators.

Reference:

SDG 16 Indicators (SDG16 Hub, 2021)

<https://www.sdg16hub.org/landing-page/sdg-16-indicators>

Recommendations against COVID-19

- The UN HLPF and regional bodies should standardize the modality of VNRs and its presentation in a more effective manner to follow up member states efforts to implement SDGs in the context of COVID-19.
- The UN should encourage member states to present their next VNRs with reflections on their responses to COVID-19, including safeguarding human rights of citizens and residents.
- The UN HLPF and regional bodies should standardize the modality of VNRs and its presentation in a more effective manner to follow up member states efforts to implement SDGs in the context of COVID-19.
- The UN should encourage member states to present their next VNRs with reflections on their responses to COVID-19, including safeguarding human rights of citizens and residents.

Reference:

Narrative Report on the State of National Implementation of SDGs: Focus on SDG 16 (JANIC, 2020)

https://www.janic.org/blog/2020/11/27/sdg16_report/

References

SDG Indicators (JAPAN SDGs Action Platform, the ministry of foreign affairs, 2021)

<https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/oda/sdgs/statistics/goal16.html>

SDG16 Data Initiative

<http://www.sdg16.org/>

PathFinder

<https://www.sdg16.plus/>

SDG Accountability Handbook by TAP Network

<https://sdgaccountability.org/>

Toolkit for a People's Scorecard on national delivery of the 2030 Agenda

<https://action4sd.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/A4SD-Peoples-Scorecard-Toolkit-1.pdf>