



YOUTH CALL TO ACTION JAPAN

Transformative, equitable, innovative and coordinated actions for the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs for a sustainable future for young people in all their diversity.

Situational Analysis

In its 2025 Voluntary National Review (VNR), the Japanese government positioned human dignity and human security as its ideological pillars, aiming to build a socio-economic system that transforms the resolution of social issues into an engine for growth. Japan's 2025 VNR demonstrates enhanced multi stakeholder participation and transparency, including structural dialogues with youth and civil society, reflecting significant progress in SDG governance. At the same time, Japan faces several structural shifts and challenges that require systemic policy evolution. These include rapid population decline and extreme aging, alongside an increased risk of climate change related disasters and heatstroke. The country also grapples with aging public infrastructure, including water systems, and a continued reliance on fossil fuels. Furthermore, there are deep rooted gender disparities in economic and political leadership, as well as in societal values. Youth alienation and

mental health issues, which also contribute to rising suicide rates, present additional challenges amid growing societal diversity that includes expanding international migrant communities.

Under the strong leadership of the SDGs Promotion Headquarters, the Japanese government has significantly contributed to establishing an institutional foundation. This includes promoting social implementation through the Japan SDGs Award and presenting a testing ground for a future society at the 2025 Expo in Osaka, Kansai. On the other hand, Japan's civil society networks point out that the government's self-assessment in the VNR relies too heavily on macro level indicators. They offer a severe critical review that the realities of intersectionality, where age, gender, nationality, and disability intricately overlap, are falling through the cracks of data collection systems, thereby concealing issues such as the feminisation of poverty and the lack of

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support for the growing number of foreign national children.

Japan has introduced the concept of Planetary Health and committed to building a climate resilient, low carbon healthcare system. It has also demonstrated advanced initiatives, such as utilising Social Impact Bonds for preventive medicine linking with Goal 9 and developing distinct well-being indicators by local governments linking with Goal 11. Internationally, Japan plans to establish a UHC Knowledge Hub in Tokyo in collaboration with the WHO and other organisations. Domestically, however, challenges remain; barriers to healthcare access faced by foreign residents and mental health measures for LGBTQ+ youth approaches to psychological isolation have

been neglected.

Japan's progress on gender equality is also severely lagging, with stark inequalities deeply rooted in political participation and economic opportunities. This is directly tied to the poverty risk caused by the high number of women in non-regular employment, which in turn leads to energy poverty as they are disproportionately hit by soaring energy prices. Furthermore, there is a lack of female leadership in disaster risk reduction and recovery efforts, drawing criticism for a contradictory double standard in the domestic application of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda that Japan promotes in its foreign policy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Institutionalise Intergenerational and Gender Responsive SDG Governance

- » To transform youth participation into institutional influence, we recommend several governance enhancements. First, the government should establish a permanent Youth and Future Generations Advisory Mechanism within the government's SDGs Promotion Headquarters, ensuring transparent selection criteria, gender balance, and regional socio-economic diversity. This involves constructing an annual reporting process that connects youth recommendations with official government responses. Second, it is crucial to allocate a dedicated participation budget to guarantee economic access for youth participating in domestic and international forums. We also urge the introduction of gender parity benchmarks in SDG related decision-making bodies, such as advisory councils and expert panels. Finally, local governments must integrate intergenerational dialogue mechanisms into their SDG implementation plans.

Mandate the Integration of Health and Gender Impacts Across Infrastructure and Energy Policies

- » We recommend a more systematic integration

of social impacts into highly technical infrastructure and energy policies. This requires promoting health impact assessments and gender disaggregated data analysis in major infrastructure renewal projects, including the modernisation of water systems for Goal 6. It is also essential to incorporate indicators for energy poverty, public health, and gender equality into the national Just Transition framework for Goal 7. Furthermore, we recommend expanding the sustainability disclosure framework so that corporate reporting standards include measurable outcomes for health, safety, and gender equality under Goal 9. Infrastructure investment strategies must prioritise the continuity of healthcare systems and disaster preparedness. Lastly, there must be a focus on providing affordable housing for university students to align with Goal 11.

Strengthen Social Cohesion as a Core Policy for Urban Planning and Disaster Risk Reduction

- » We recommend institutionalising not only physical infrastructure but also social resilience. To achieve this, indicators for social cohesion and the prevention of isolation should be incorporated into municipal disaster risk reduction and urban planning frameworks. It

is equally important to fund community based intergenerational platforms that address aging related isolation and promote mutual support networks. Local governments should also recognise international migrants as formal stakeholders in planning processes, including disaster management councils. Finally, expanding women's leadership in local disaster management and urban decision-making bodies through measurable representation targets is essential.

Advancing Strategic Multilateral Leadership Grounded in Health and Gender Equality

- » As a major donor, we recommend that Japan model integrated SDG governance on the international stage. This can be achieved by systematically integrating youth empowerment indicators into Official Development Assistance (ODA) evaluation criteria. Furthermore, international climate and infrastructure finance should be aligned with the principles of a Just Transition and health resilience. Finally, Japan should actively share its experiences with demographic shifts as a global model, particularly concerning the governance of aging societies and community-based resilience.

Conclusion

- » For Japan to exert leadership in the international community beyond 2030, a paradigm shift is essential: actualising the synergy approach institutionally, establishing a data driven evaluation system that visualises intersectionality, and guaranteeing genuine participation where the people affected hold substantive decision-making power. By linking domestic structural reforms particularly, the elimination of gender inequality with frameworks for international cooperation, Japan can further solidify its credibility and leadership in the global sustainability agenda beyond 2030.

The APFSD country and sub-regional briefs were developed through collective discussions and engagements between youth advocates at the APFSD Youth Forum in Bangkok on 18-20 February, 2026. The Japan drafting team consisted of Harumi Endo with inputs from Jin Tada. Overall supervision was provided by the ARROW Call To Action team.