

TERRITORIAL ORGANIZATION

Japan is a unitary monarchy with a two-tiered subnational structure. The country is divided into 47 prefectures at the regional level, and into 1747 local governments at the municipal level. The municipal level comprises Cabinet-Order Designated Cities, cities, towns, villages and the 23 special wards in metropolitan Tokyo. The prefectural level consists of one metropolitan district (Tokyo), two urban prefectures (Kyoto and Osaka), one “district” or “circuit” (Hokkaidō), and rural prefectures.¹



Unless otherwise indicated, all the information in this profile is taken from the previously published Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs).²

1. NATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR SDG IMPLEMENTATION

In 2016, the **SDGs Implementation Guiding Principles** were adopted as a national strategy to implement the 2030 Agenda.³ The **2018 Basic Policies** and **2018 Economic Growth Strategy (EGS)** are committed to promoting the SDGs. In December 2017, Japan adopted the 2018 SDG Action Plan and in June 2018, the Expanded SDG Action Plan.⁴ The **SDGs Action Plan 2021** reiterates the government’s commitment to achieve the SDGs even in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic (see below, section 3.2).

1.1 NATIONAL COORDINATION MECHANISMS

In 2016, the government established a Cabinet body called **SDGs Promotion Headquarters**, headed by the Prime Minister. This cabinet ensures the coordination of the SDG strategy at the inter-ministerial level. They also recognize leading companies and non-governmental organizations working on the SDGs. So far, the SDGs Promotion Headquarters and the **SDGs Promotion Roundtable Meetings** have been held twice a year (only once in 2020 due to the spread of the COVID-19) to exchange opinions on Japan’s efforts to achieve the SDGs. It was pointed out at the July 2020 Roundtable Meetings that it is important to further accelerate discussions by establishing **four working groups** on education, environment, progress management/monitoring, and public relations.

1.2 VNR ELABORATION PROCESS

The government of Japan has composed the 2017 VNR under the SDGs Promotion Headquarters through consultation among relevant governmental agencies. In drafting the report, SDGs Roundtable Meetings were held comprising representatives of governmental agencies and other stakeholders. Moreover, consultations were held with civil societies and the private sector. The 2017 VNR described how Japan had established its institutional mechanism and undertaken initiatives to promote the SDGs since their adoption in 2015. Since then, various global stakeholders, including national and local governments, the private sector, and civil society have taken actions to achieve the SDGs, raising awareness of the SDGs and promoting efforts to achieve the SDGs both in Japan and abroad. The 2021 VNR was prepared not only through discussions within the government, but through discussions at the **SDGs Promotion Roundtable**, which consists of representatives from various fields, discussions with civil society, the youth generation, and the private sector. In addition, the report was subjected to public comment so that the views of a wide range of citizens were incorporated.

1. See: https://www.sng-wofi.org/reports/SNGWOFI_2019_report_country_profiles_DEC2019_UPDATES.pdf

2. See: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/16445JapanVNR2017.pdf> (2017); https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/28957210714_VNR_2021_Japan.pdf (2021)

3. Through the Guiding Principles, Japan established the following vision: “Become a leader toward a future where economic, social and environmental improvements are attained in an integrated, sustainable and resilient manner while leaving no one behind.” The document sets out Japan’s vision, priority areas, implementation principles, implementation framework and approach to the follow-up and review processes.

4. UCLG, 2019, GOLD V Report, <https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/ENG-GOLD-V-2020.pdf>

1.3 MONITORING

In response to the adoption of the SDGs Implementation Guiding Principles, consultations have been conducted among ministries on the availability of official statistics for reporting the global indicators. As a result, Japan covers around 138 indicators, which is 55.9% of 247 SDG indicators in total (as of April 2021). The **Working Group on Progress Management and Monitoring** exchanged opinions on the status of indicators and evaluations in Japan that complement the SDG indicators and discussed the progress of evaluation by the private sector members of the SDGs Promotion Roundtable in preparing the 2021 VNR.

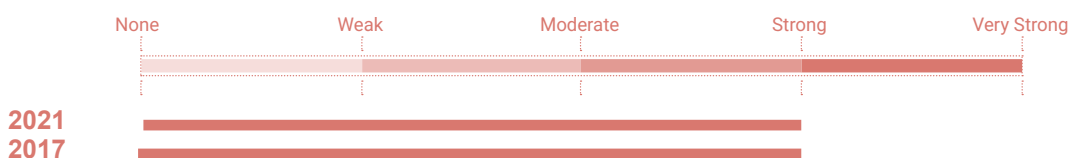
2. LRGs INVOLVEMENT IN SDG LOCALIZATION

LRGs are involved in the **SDG Promotion Roundtables** (consultative level). Based on a long tradition of strong collaboration between central and local governments, the Japanese government encourages local governments to incorporate the SDGs into their strategies and policies. The government launched a new project, the **SDGs Models of Local Governments**, to provide support to selected local governments in their implementation of the SDGs. With the support of different programmes (mainly through the **SDGs Future Cities** initiative,⁵ a product of the pre-existing 'Eco-Model Cities' programme), over a hundred cities have shown a proactive interest in implementing innovative strategies and action plans to localize the SDGs, with a special focus on environment, aging population and the involvement of the private sector and civil society.⁶ Other initiatives such as the **Public-Private Partnership Platform for Local SDGs** and **Local SDG Finance** have created momentum to promote the SDGs.

In 2017, the percentage of LRGs working on the SDGs was only 1%, but by 2020, it had risen to 39.7%, and the government is working to increase it to 60% by the end of 2024.

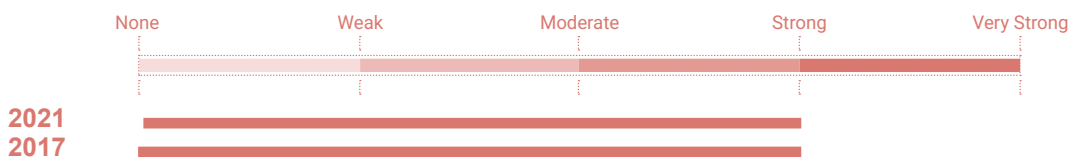
2.1 LRGs PARTICIPATION

► In the VNR process



Comments: The 2021 VNR mentions LRGs' importance in SDG implementation, as well as examples of best practices. LRGs were consulted through the SDGs Promotion Roundtable.

► In national coordination mechanisms for SDG implementation



Comments: Hamamatsu City participates at decision making level (GTF Survey 2021).

This assessment is based on the information collected in the VNRs and in the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments' annual survey on the localization of the SDGs.

2.2 VNR REFERENCES

LRGs are mentioned throughout the 2017 VNR, and there is a specific subsection on local governments' engagement in SDG implementation, with different examples (see VNR, 2017, p. 15-16). The 2021 VNR includes several positive examples of LRGs that have taken the lead to promote the SDGs, including four cities that have conducted their own Voluntary Local Reviews. It also includes a special subsection called "Promoting the SDGs in Japan (highlights of SDGs localization in Japan)", explaining the different initiatives that the government has developed to localize the SDGs. This includes the Japan SDGs Award, which seeks to recognize companies, organizations, etc., that are making outstanding efforts to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs. The report also mentions the program SDGs Future Cities that selects the municipalities that propose outstanding initiatives to achieve the SDGs. Additionally, this section mentions the SDGs for Regional Revitalization Public-Private Partnership Platform, which is an information-sharing platform for the public and private sectors to deepen partnerships,

5. Local governments that propose outstanding initiatives to achieve the SDGs have been selected as "**SDG Future Cities**" since 2018, and some initiatives of leading municipalities among the SDGs Future Cities were selected as "**Municipal SDGs Model Projects**".

6. UCLG, 2019, GOLD V Report, <https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/ENG-GOLD-V-2020.pdf>

solve local issues and revitalize local economies, in cooperation with LRGs. The 2021 VNR also highlights the role of different stakeholders, including a section on LRGs referring to the elaboration of VLRs and pointing out their importance to promote the establishment of cross-departmental promotion organizations and the development of systems of administration; reflect SDG elements in various plans; establish governance methods to manage progress; accurately measure SDG initiatives to disseminate information and share results; promote cooperation with stakeholders both in Japan and overseas; and set local indicators, among others.

2.3 SPECIFIC PROJECTS AND CASES

- ▶ The city of **Yokohama** has been amongst the most committed in the SDGs Future Cities initiative, with its 'Yokohama Future City' initiative focusing on environment, care of the elderly and culture.⁷
- ▶ **Hamamatsu** adopted the Hamamatsu SDGs Future City Plan to promote forest, energy and intercultural initiatives by taking advantage of the local area's unique characteristics and resources such as its "Warm and Diverse Topography", "Enterprising Spirit", and "Diverse and Supportive Society".⁸
- ▶ A total of 124 cities have been selected as "SDGs Future Cities" through four rounds of selection by 2021, of which 10 projects have been selected as "Municipal SDGs Model Projects" each year and subsidized by the government. The selected cities formulate action plans with **key performance indicators (KPIs)** to achieve the goals, while receiving advice from the Cabinet Office and the Task Force of Local Governments and Experts on SDGs. In setting KPIs, the cities are recommended to use the **List of SDGs Local Indicators for Local Development** published by the government.⁹
- ▶ Moreover, Japanese cities have been involved in climate change actions for a long time. **Tokyo's** Climate Change Strategy is attempting to reduce final energy consumption.¹⁰

2.4 VOLUNTARY SUBNATIONAL AND/OR LOCAL REVIEWS (VSRs / VLRs)

Three cities – **Toyama**, **Kitakyushu** and **Shimokawa** – launched their VLRs in 2018.¹¹ **Hamamatsu** published its VLR in 2019 and **Tokyo** and **Yokohama** prepared theirs in 2021.¹²

2.5 MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION

As stated by the 2021 VNR, ESG investment, SDGs investment, and impact investment, to name but a few, have become popular as investments that contribute to the achievement of the SDGs. In addition, the concept of **SDGs finance for local development** has been proposed, and the idea of providing active support to companies that promote the SDGs was born.

3. RELEVANT INFORMATION

General comments: Japan has, under the Development Cooperation Charter, set Human Security as the guiding principle that lies at the foundation of its assistance and placed issues such as health, disaster risk reduction and gender equality, which are listed in the SDGs as major challenges to be addressed, at the core of its international cooperation.

3.1 WOMEN PARTICIPATION

In May 2018, the Act on the Promotion of Gender Equality in the Political Field was enacted. This law aims for an equal number of male and female candidates in elections to the House of Representatives, the House of Councilors, and local assemblies. It also stipulates the responsibilities of national and local governments and their voluntary efforts, such as setting targets for the number of male and female candidates for official positions belonging to political parties.

9. More information can be found in the VNR, 2021, p. 22.

10. UCLG, 2019, GOLD V Report, <https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/ENG-GOLD-V-2020.pdf>

11. See the summaries of the 3 VLRs in UCLG, 2019, GOLD V Report, p. 116: <https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/ENG-GOLD-V-2020.pdf>

12. See: [https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/Toyama%20\(2018\).pdf](https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/Toyama%20(2018).pdf) ;

[https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/Kitakyushu%20\(2018\).pdf](https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/Kitakyushu%20(2018).pdf) ;

[https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/Shimokawa%20\(2018\).pdf](https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/Shimokawa%20(2018).pdf) ;

[https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/Hamamatsu%20\(2019\).pdf](https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/Hamamatsu%20(2019).pdf) ;

https://gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/tokyo_2021.pdf ;

https://gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/yokohama_2021.pdf

3.2 COVID 19

The **SDGs Action Plan 2021** decided in December 2020, based on the fact that there are serious concerns about delays in efforts to achieve the SDGs due to the spread of the COVID-19, sets four priority areas in which Japan will accelerate efforts: 1) Countering infectious disease and preparing for the next crisis; 2) Business for building back better and growth strategies through innovation; 3) SDGs-driven regional revitalization, creating a virtuous cycle of economy and environment; and 4) Accelerating actions through empowerment and strengthening bonds among people. The total amount of the SDGs Action Plan 2021, including support for measures to combat the COVID-19, was approximately 6.5 trillion yen, nearly four times the amount of the previous year (approximately 1.7 trillion yen), demonstrating the government's concerted efforts to implement a variety of measures while taking the SDGs into consideration.

4. SDG INDICATORS¹³

5.5.1. (b) Proportion of seats held by women (%) in local governments		14.3 (2019)
6.1.1. Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services (%)	Urban	-
	Rural	-
6.2.1. (a) Proportion of population using safely managed sanitation services (%)	Urban	-
	Rural	-
11.1.1. Proportion of population living in slums, informal settlements or inadequate housing (%)		-
11.6.1. Proportion of municipal solid waste collected and managed (%)		96.1 (2015, Tokyo)
11.6.2. Air pollution – annual means of particulate matter in cities (population weighted)		13.4 (2016)
11.b.2. Proportion of local governments that have adopted local disaster risk reduction strategies in line with national strategies (%)		100 (2019)

¹³ The data used for this table come from the UN SDG Indicators Database. See: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/UNSDG/IndDatabasePage>. More information on the country's progress towards the SDGs here: <https://country-profiles.unstatshub.org/jpn>