Comparative Study of SDG Progress in Japan and Thailand

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Abstract

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have emerged as a crucial priority for governments, as well as companies across industries and sizes worldwide. The SDGs were recently adopted by the United Nations in 2015 and are intended to be achieved by 2030. Given the newness of this concept in the business world, many companies and countries are still seeking optimal approaches to achieving their SDG targets, resulting in significant disparities in opportunities and challenges. However, conducting a comparative analysis of the progress of SDGs in different countries can help identify key similarities and differences, leading to more effective solutions. This study examines the definition and purpose of the SDG concept and provides an overview of the current landscape in Japan and Thailand, followed by a detailed investigation of each country's progress. The study includes a comparative study that summarizes the factors contributing to the differences in progress and offers suggestions for governments and businesses to achieve their SDG targets.

Keywords: Sustainable Development Goals, Environment, Japan, Thailand

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การศึกษาเชิงเปรียบเทียบความคืบหน้าของเป้าหมายการพัฒนาที่ยั่งยืนระหว่างประเทศไทยและประเทศญี่ปุ่น

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บทคัดย่อ

เป้าหมายการพัฒนาที่ยั่งยืนกลายเป็นความสำคัญเร่งด่วนสำหรับรัฐบาลและบริษัทต่าง ๆ ทั่วโลก โดย เป้าหมายการพัฒนาที่ยั่งยืนได้รับการรับรองโดยองค์การสหประชาชาติในปี ค.ศ. 2015 และคาดหวังจะบรรลุ เป้าหมายภายในปี ค.ศ 2023 ทั้ยนี้เนื่องจากเป็นแนวคิดใหม่ในโลกธุรกิจ บริษัทและประเทศต่าง ๆ ยังคงหาวิธีการ ที่ดีที่สุดในการบรรลุเป้าหมายการพัฒนาที่ยั่งยืน จึงส่งผลให้เกิดความแต่งต่างอย่างมาก ในด้านโอกาสและ ความท้าทาย อย่างไรก็ตามการศึกษาเชิงเปรียบเทียบของความคืบหน้าเป้าหมายการพัฒนาที่ยั่งยืน ในประเทศ ต่าง ๆ สามารถช่วยระบุความเหมือนและความแตกต่างที่สำคัญ อันจะนำไปสู่ทางออกที่มีประสิทธิภาพมากยิ่งขึ้น วิจัยนี้ศึกษาคำนิยามและวัตถุประสงค์ของเป้าหมายการพัฒนาที่ยั่งยืน อีกทั้งนำเสนอภาพรวมของสถานการณ์ ปัจจุบันในประเทศญี่ปุ่นและประเทศไทย ประกอบกับการศึกษาเชิงลึกว่าด้วยความคืบหน้าของแต่ละประเทศ วิจัยนี้ประกอบด้วยการศึกษาเชิงเปรียบเทียบที่สรุปตัวแปรอันก่อให้เกิดความแตกต่างของความคืบหน้า และ นำเสนอข้อแนะนำสำหรับรัฐบาลและธุรกิจเพื่อบรรลุเป้าหมายการพัฒนาที่ยั่งยืน

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1. Introduction

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were first introduced by the United Nations in 2015 as global common goals to enhance the quality of all lives (such as people living in poverty, women and girls, and minorities) on earth while keeping a balance between social, economic, and environmental sustainability. These goals are aimed to be met by 2030 (Agenda 2030). The SDGs consist of 17 aspects as demonstrated in Table 1.

Table 1: 17 Sustainable Development Goals

#	Goal	Short Description
1	No Poverty	End poverty in all its forms everywhere
2	Zero Hunger	End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
3	Good Health and Well-being	Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
4	Quality Education	Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
5	Gender Equality	Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
6	Clean Water and Sanitation	Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
7	Affordable and Clean Energy	Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
8	Decent Work and Economic Growth	Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
9	Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure	Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
10	Reduced Inequalities	Reduce inequality within and among countries
11	Sustainable Cities and Communities	Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
12	Responsible Consumption and Production	Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
13	Climate Action	Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
14	Life below Water	Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
15	Life on Land	Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
16	Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions	Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
17	Partnerships for the Goal	Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

Note: Adapted from *Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development* by the United Nations, n.d.

This academic paper provides a broad overview of the SDGs' progress in the selected two countries. Therefore, it covers a few SDGs only, such as SDG 7, SDG 8, SDG 9, SDG 11, SDG 12, SDG 13, and SDG 14.

With the universal call issued by the United Nations, member countries also participate in the shared goals by adopting and implementing initiatives and policies to meet the goals. The approaches are different from country to country. The researcher believes every country will benefit by comparing signs of progress and adopting other countries' proven effective approaches. This will reduce the time of trial and error and will result in the acceleration of the speed toward the goals.

Among many United Nations members, this academic paper compares the situations between Japan and Thailand. The rationale behind selecting these two countries lies in their shared geographical location in Asia and the various similarities in cultures and values. This commonality suggests that adaptability may be relatively easier between them. Furthermore, the enduring history of relationships and cooperation in areas such as economics, politics, education, and cultures strengthens the foundation for this comparative study.

For instance, both countries have collaborated on economic initiatives, political strategies, educational programs, and cultural exchanges over the years. These historical connections underscore the potential for mutual learning and cross-implementation of successful approaches. By delving into the specific examples of collaborative endeavors, this paper aims to illustrate how such shared experiences can offer valuable insights. These insights, in turn, can contribute to identifying potential solutions for addressing the unique challenges each country faces in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This paper begins by investigating background overviews of the SDGs, and the scope of this paper. The following sections will be devoted to exploring the two countries in focus deeply. Each section starts by providing an overview, where the current situation and progress toward Sustainable Development Goals will be discussed. The subsections will then, investigate various aspects such as government policies, initiatives, participation from private sectors, challenges, and opportunities.

In part 4, the author compares and analyzes the similarities and differences between the two countries, before summarizing and providing suggestions for each country in part 5.

Objectives

1) To better understand the current situation towards Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by Japan, and Thailand

2) To assess the possibilities of policy transfer from one country to another, particularly examining the adaptation and implementation of successful Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) policies and initiatives

2. SDGs in Japan

A. Overview of Japan's progress toward achieving SDGs

Japan was among the founding members of the SDGs formulation in 2015. Masakazu Hamachi, the Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, made a statement to express the country's firm determination to contribute to the success of Agenda 2030. He mentioned that Japan, as a developed country, will join hands with other countries and will commit to supporting developing countries' efforts to implement their action plans toward the SDGs by 2030. This was reaffirmed again in 2019 at the SDG summit (held every four years at the level of heads of state and government) with the purpose of accelerating their efforts to achieve the SDGs by the promised timeframe.

In 2016, the government also established a new cabinet unit body, called "the SDGs Promotion Headquarters" headed by the prime minister of Japan (Shinzo Abe, at the time of the foundation). To accomplish Agenda 2030, the central government decided to cooperate with partners, both governmental agencies and others. Japan sets the Ministry of foreign affairs to act as a main actor. In other words, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs duties include communicating and coordinating with other parties both domestically, and internationally. The examples of partners are as follows.

Government Agencies:

- Financial Services Agency
- Consumer Affairs Agency
- Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications
- Ministry of Justice
- Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology
- Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry
- Ministry of the Environment
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Other organizations:

- Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)
- United Nations Information Centre
- UNICEF
- UNESCO
- Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA)
- Japan Agency for Marine-Earth Science and Technology (JAMSTEC)
- Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST)
- KEIDANREN (Japan Business Federation)

The country is to focus on accomplishing various goals, with eight priority areas, as shown in Table 2.

According to the Sustainable Development Report 2022 (Sachs et al., 2022), Japan is ranked 19 out of 163 UN country members in the SDG Index with an index score of 79.6. Japan is reported to have achieved the goals in areas relating to quality education (SDG 4), industry, innovation, and infrastructure (SDG 9), and peace, justice, and strong institutions (SDG 16). Moreover, the country is making remarkable progress in reducing poverty (SDG 1), improving populations' health and well-being (SDG 3), and enhancing decent work and economic growth (SDG 8). Yet, the country has been facing major challenges in climate-related areas, marine & freshwater and terrestrial biodiversity as seen in the Spillover Score of 67.3 (ranked 134 out of 163),

of which the progress has been reported as "stagnating" even though the country decided to put the three goals (SDG 13: Climate Action, SDG 14: Life below Water and 15: Life on Land) as three of their eight priority areas.

Table 2: Japan's eight priority areas towards SDGs

5P	Priority Areas	Related SDGs																
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
People	① Empowerment of All People	✓			✓	✓			✓		✓		✓					
	② Achievement of Good Health and Longevity			✓														
Prosperity	③ Creating Growth Market , Revitalization of RuralAreas and Promoting Technological Innovation		✓						✓	✓		✓						
	④ Sustainable and Resilient Land Use, Promoting Quality Infrastructure		✓				✓			✓		✓						
Planet	⑤ Energy Conservation, Renewable Energy, Climate Change Measures, and Sound Material-Cycle Society							✓					✓	✓				
	⑥ Conservation of Environment, including Biodiversity, Forests and Oceans		✓	✓											✓	✓		
Peace	⑦ Achievement of Peaceful, Safe and Secure Societies																✓	
Partnership	⑧ Strengthening the Means and Frameworks of the Implementation of the SDGs																	✓

Note: Adapted from *Japan's Voluntary National Review Report on the implementation of the Sustainable Development* by Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2017

B. Japanese Government policies and initiatives/ private sectors' policies toward achieving SDGs

Collaboration among the central government, local authorities, NGOs, NPOs, and private parties can be seen as Japan's unique SDGs approach. Japanese central government can be seen as having been acting as a main player in leading the country toward its goals, while also acting as a significant supporter for other parties to join hands toward common goals. In other words, instead of focusing its initiatives on a few prime cities, Japan attempt to decentralize its focus to ensure the main purpose of developing the world without leaving anybody behind. For example, Japan is known for having been struggling with a slag birthrate and rapid aging problems. The trends are expected to be worsened by the rapid urbanization. To resolve the difficulties of the population flooding in a few specific cities, Japan has decided to promote two initiatives: FutureCity and Eco-Model City.

According to Office for the Promotion of Regional Revitalization, Cabinet Secretariat (n.d.), the FutureCity (FCI or「環境未来都市」構想) is an initiative to build sustainable human-centered cities and communities that embrace people-friendly values. The initiative aims to tackle Japan's ongoing difficulties, the environment, and the aging society. The country hopes to create "the cities "where everybody wants to live" and "everyone has vitality", taking into consideration of three values: environmental values, social values, and economic values (see Figure 1). As a foundation, the government also selected cities that have been working on high-but-achievable goals to create a low-carbon society, as a model for the rest of the country, a so-called, Eco-Model City. The two initiatives were planned nationwide and brought out the unique approach from each local city and region. As a result, Japan has obtained lists of proven-effective approaches that can be carried out from a small scale of one little village to a larger, as one province or even larger.

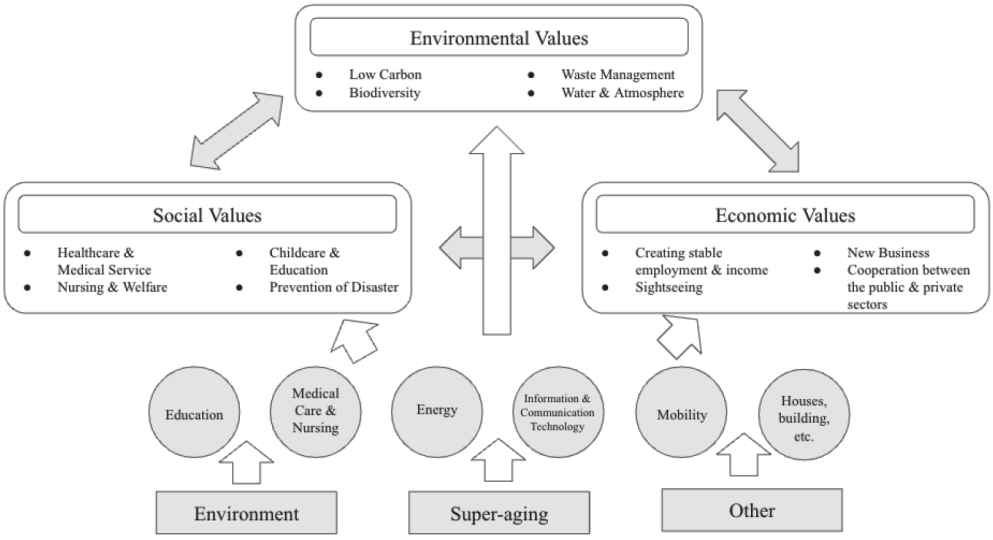

Figure 1: "FutureCity" Initiative

Note: Adapted from *Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development* by Office for the Promotion of Regional Revitalization, Cabinet Secretariat, n.d.

Furthermore, the government also establish an annual reward ceremony, "the Japan SDGs Award". The award, established in 2017 at the third SDGs Promotion Headquarters meeting, is an initiative to call for participation from other sectors apart from the country's central government for their noteworthy efforts to support the domestic and/or international accomplishment, of the Agenda 2030 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2023). Any organizations are eligible for awards ranging from local governments and companies to NGOs/NPOs. The awards are categorized into four categories; 1. Chief's Award (by Prime Minister), 2. Deputy-chiefs' Award (by Chief Cabinet Secretary), 3. Deputy-chiefs' Award (by Foreign Minister), and 4. Special Award (SDGs Partnership Award). The SDGs Promotion Headquarters will decide the award winners and hold an annual award ceremony. The example of awarding winning organizations and their efforts are provided in Table 3.

Table 3: The Japan SDGs Award Winning Sample Cases

Organization	Award Winning	Noteworthy Efforts	Related SDGs																
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Local Government																			
- TABETEレスキュー直売所プロジェクト共同体 (Representative: Higashimatsuyama City, Saitama Prefecture) (Translation: TABETE-Rescue Direct Sale Place Community Project) (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2023; Higashimatsuyama City, 2023; TABETE, 2022)	Deputy-chiefs' Award (by Chief Cabinet Secretary) - 6th Japan SDGs Award	- Reducing food waste by promoting direct sale places for unsold agricultural products, as well as, donating part of the unsold to kids' canteen projects. - Increasing farmers' income, while also reducing CO2 emissions using train transportation - Providing opportunities for students to learn about logistics and social problems.	✓			✓							✓	✓					✓
- Osaki Town, Kagoshima Prefecture (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2023; 大崎町, 2022)	Deputy-chiefs' Award (by Chief Cabinet Secretary) - 2nd Japan SDGs Award	- Building sustainable local community through recycling, and recycling education - Accomplishing the highest recycling rate of Japan (11 consecutive years)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓				✓					✓
Companies																			
- euglena Co.,Ltd. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2023; Euglena, n.d.)	Deputy-chiefs' Award (by Chief Cabinet Secretary) - 5th Japan SDGs Award	- Promoting Bangladesh's agricultural sector by providing know-how on planting and harvesting green beans - Creating jobs and increasing the income of Bangladesh farmers by purchasing harvested produce at a higher-than-market price - Profits after selling in Japan, and in Bangaladesh (at the capital price) are used to invest in other support project	✓	✓						✓		✓							✓
- Ito En, Ltd. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2023; Ito En, Ltd., n.d.)	Speicial Award (SDGs Partnership Award) - 1st Japan SDGs Award	- Accomplishing the sustainability in its entire tea-making value chain.		✓		✓			✓	✓	✓			✓					
NGOs/NPOs																			
- 特定非営利活動法人ACE (Action against Child Exploitation) (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2023; Ace, n.d.)	Chief's Award (by Prime Minister) - 6th Japan SDGs Award	- Reducing and preventing child labour in India, and Ghana. - Providing education and household support for people living in poverty in aforementioned countries.	✓			✓	✓			✓				✓					
- 青森県立名久井農業高等学校環境研究班 (Translation: Aomori Prefectural Nakui Agricultural High School Environmental Research Group) (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2023)	Deputy-chiefs' Award (by Chief Cabinet Secretary) - 4th Japan SDGs Award	- Developing new agricultural techniques with greener and cleaner side-effects: ex. a system that simultaneously purifies lake water and produces food, foam pesticide (able to suppress the scattering of pesticides, and environmental pollution)	✓	✓				✓			✓				✓				
特定非営利活動法人 TABLE FOR TWO International (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2023; TABLE FOR TWO International, n.d.)	Deputy-chiefs' Award (by Foreign Minister) - 3rd Japan SDGs Award	- Promoting campaigns to help improve the quality of families living in poverty in Africa, and Asia - Proving higher education results in the countries where supports in school food are sent.	✓	✓		✓						✓							✓

Note. Data Collected by author in May 2023.

C. Challenges and obstacles in achieving SDGs in Japan

Japan, though ranked comparatively high in the worldwide SDGs ranking, still struggle to keep the environmental goals (SDG 13, SDG 14, and SDG 15) on track as all three remain major challenges.

In October 2021, the Government of Japan announced its long-term strategy to cut down its greenhouse gas (GHG) emission by 80% (or ultimately, Net Zero) by the year 2050 in accordance with Article 4 of the Paris Agreement. This is the strategy that is aimed to accelerate the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic's impacts. The government of Japan claims that the strategy's focus is to re-design the country's economy from a linear economy based on mass production, consumption, and waste, to a circular economy. This includes an attempt to preserve biodiversity both marine and terrestrial (SDG 14, and SDG 15). Nonetheless, to accomplish net zero, Japan needs to go through a radical, yet structural transition in every aspect.

D. Opportunities for Japan to further advance in SDGs

Since Japan possesses advantages in engineering and technological knowledge, the country has the potential to achieve SDGs at a faster pace than other countries. However, in recent years, the country fails to make notable progress in the field related to the environment and climate change, leaving it with comparatively fewer goals to prioritize.

Japan's climate policy was based mainly on energy efficiency measures at every level from household, local, and corporate, up to the national level (Sugiyama et al., 2021). To completely decarbonize, Japan should diversify its strategies such as alternative sources of renewable energy, or price instruments to accelerate the speed of decarbonization. Among developed countries, Japan is claimed to take a slow start in its transition to renewable energy (Cherp et al., 2016).

3. SDGs in Thailand

A. Overview of Thailand's progress toward achieving SDGs

According to the Sustainable Development Report (2022), Thailand currently ranks 44 out of 163 on the SDG Index, with major and significant challenges still present in meeting environmental goals. Moreover, the country is also suffering from SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals as the progress is reported to decrease from the previous years. Moreover, some of the goals make no progress, i.e. SDG 2: Zero Hunger, SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities, SDG13: Climate Action, SDG 14: Life below Water, SDG 15: Life on Land, and SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions. Comparatively, Thailand is beating its Japanese counterpart with the Spillover Score of 86.7. Nonetheless, just like other nations, the Coronavirus pandemic has posed challenges to Thailand's economy and society, undermining its ability to achieve the SDGs (United Nations, 2021).

Bunnag (2021) states that Thailand is making notable progress in areas relating to the improvement of quality of life such as the elimination of poverty (SDG 1), enhanced quality and access to education (SDG 4), and increased availability to clean water and sanitation (SDG 6). Furthermore, they are also meeting economic development goals such as decent work and economic growth (SDG 8) and the development of industry, innovation and infrastructure (SDG 9). Conversely, other indicators relating to the environment such as climate change (SDG 13), marine life conservation (SDG 14), and land ecosystem (SDG 15) remain a challenge. The Thai government has taken action to address these challenges, including reducing the impacts of climate change, promoting sustainable consumption and production, protecting the ecosystem below water, and increasing commitment to the management of land and forests (United Nations, 2021).

B. Thai government policies and initiatives/ private sectors' policies toward achieving SDGs

To accomplish the Agenda 2030, Thailand brings together actors from different sectors, such as governmental agencies, private sectors, academia, and

international organizations. Samples of the cooperating governmental agencies are as follows.

- Ministry of Finance
- Ministry of Tourism and Sports
- Ministry of Social Development and Human Security
- Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation
- Ministry of Digital Economy and Society
- Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
- Ministry of Energy
- Ministry of Commerce
- Ministry of Interior
- Ministry of Public Health
- Ministry of Industry
- Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives
- The Board of Investment of Thailand (BOI)

Thailand aligns its 20-Year National Development Plans with the SDGs and follows the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP). The National Committee for Sustainable Development (CDS) has been set in place to oversee the implementation of all 17 goals within 2030, guided by the three key principles of moderation, prudence, and reasonableness (Open Development Thailand, 2018). The Alternative Energy Development Plan has also been initiated, aimed at increasing renewable energy usage to achieve a 30 percent reduction in the nation's total energy consumption within 2036. As a result, renewables have become Thailand's most prioritized form of energy (IRENA, 2017). Furthermore, the government has made efforts to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions stemming from transportation by continuously expanding the BTS Skytrain and MRT networks. As an example, in June, the Hua Mak to Samrong yellow line of the BTS was opened for testing, demonstrating the Thai government's commitment to further develop and extend the public transportation routes. This exhibits the Thai's government dedication to addressing environmental issues and promoting sustainable transportation options.

Additionally, many leading businesses in Thailand have embraced corporate social responsibility through sustainable business practices and strategies. Some companies have implemented their own projects in efforts to attain sustainable growth by transforming their manufacturing processes or focusing on the company's core values (Open Development Thailand, 2018). For example, Thai Union, one of Thailand's leading seafood companies proven sustainable business activities throughout their production process and ocean protection. They have also extended this positive influence towards their suppliers and other stakeholders, requiring them to operate in a socially responsible manner (Thai Union, n.d.).

C. Challenges and obstacles in achieving SDGs in Thailand

Thailand faces significant challenges in achieving indicators concerning the environment (SDG 2, 6, 12, 14, and 15). Over time, these challenges are inclined to exacerbate (Bunnag, 2021). Problems such as environmental degradation caused by industries and the public hinder the nation's progress toward achieving environmental sustainability goals. Reduction in single-use plastics has been a focus, but challenges such as convenience, economic factors, and limited awareness and participation hinder progress. Despite the introduction of eco-friendly materials to society, issues related to price, properties, appearance, and supply chain remain (Sedtha et al., 2022). Cultural and traditional factors, such as the Songkran Festival, also contributes to water overuse (Intason et al., 2021).

Over the past two decades, it was estimated that the fish farming industry expanded from 0.6 to 0.9 million tons. Shrimps contributed to 40 percent of the total fish farming production, followed by fish at 38 percent and mollusks at 22 percent. The fish farming industry is crucial for providing food and nutritional diets, but there are issues regarding the environmental sustainability of current practices. This sector has played a role in environmental deterioration in the form of degradation of habitat, water contamination, and adverse ecological impacts (Sampantamit et al., 2020).

D. Opportunities for Thailand to further advance in SDGs

To accelerate the progress toward achieving SDGs, partnerships between the private and public sectors are crucial. Policymakers can collaborate with researchers and NGOs to support environmentally conscious conduct, promote reuse, and condemn the use of single-use plastic (Sedtha et al., 2022). Event managers can also contribute by promoting campaigns on water saving during festivals, and increasing public awareness of water scarcity and drought issues (Intason et al., 2021).

4. Comparative analysis of SDGs in Japan and Thailand

A. Key similarities

The progress in meeting the environmental goals (SDG 13, SDG 14, and SDG 15) remains a huge challenge in both countries. To begin with, the reduction of single-use plastics was interrupted during the COVID-19 pandemic, and its lingering effect still holds. This might continue to exist until the population in both countries get more familiar with the new normal lifestyle after the pandemic. The consumption, and production in both countries are reported to be alerting as well. One of the shared reasons is that both countries need more to feed its population, while also needing to supply the world's demand of nutritional diets. This can be seen to affect SDG 14, and SDG 15.

In addition, both countries tend to regard the participation from the private sector as "voluntary". To accelerate the whole country's speed toward the goals by 2030, participation from other parties apart from the central government is recommended.

B. Key differences

As Japan is a developed country, its infrastructure has been planned and well-established long before Thailand. This might also affect the other SDGs, such as SDG 3, SDG 4, SDG 9, and SDG 11. Thailand, on the other hand, is still developing its infrastructure. This fact can be seen as a factor linking to a slower

speed to achieve each goal. For example, if Japan is to achieve decarbonization in transportation, an alternative public transportation system is already available, while Thailand is still struggling to extend the network of its low-carbon train system.

Moreover, the Japanese government is cooperating with many organizations regardless of size. In other words, local governments, local communities, SMEs, and many other small-medium size organizations, are being recognized for their effort toward the country's goal. Thailand, on the other hand, has no record of this perspective.

5. Conclusion

Lessons learned from each other's efforts toward achieving SDGs and recommendations for future action.

Although the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were agreed upon at the national level, the private sector can also play a significant role in achieving them. This is because they have the resources, expertise, and innovative capacity to address relevant challenges, especially, environmental, and social challenges (Rashed and Shah, 2020; Bengtsson et al., 2018; Hacking, 2018; Frey & Sabbatino, 2017). The private sector also needs to take responsibility for the degradation of the environment and unsustainable consumption.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has been a common standard in the private sector, and it shares much in common with the SDGs. Companies' CSR reports can be seen as a participation in promoting the SDGs (Kumi et al., 2020; Palmer and Flanagen, 2016). However, as promoting the SDGs directly by the private sector is not legally binding, regulatory frameworks, subsidies, or benefits should be provided to ensure the accountability of businesses.

Apart from business sectors, both countries can call for more participants from other entities as a part of holistic cooperation. This includes local government, local communities, schools, and universities. This could result in achieving the goals in more accelerated timeframe.

Finally, two countries can extend cooperation across borders. As one country might have already proven-effective approaches that can work well with the other's conditions or situations. Achieving SDGs is the world's goal that needs to be accomplished together, therefore, sharing knowledge and expertise is strongly recommended.

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