

FOCUS

Asia-Pacific



Newsletter of the Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Center (HURIGHTS OSAKA)

September 2024 Vol. 117

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Editorial

Youth Vision and Energy

Young people have a fresher sense of the world. They know issues that cause suffering to people and they act to address them at their own level. This is seen in human rights-related initiatives that provide the youth in Asia the space to learn about realities in the community and find creative and innovative ways of addressing issues and promoting human rights.

Some youth in Asia engage in raising awareness on issues and human rights, advocate for the respect for and protection of the rights of the marginalized, facilitate youth empowerment including personal development, and provide support for marginalized communities.

These youth have the creativity and capacity to use the latest information and communication technologies to disseminate their messages to fellow youth and the general public. They use art, do research, organize training and undertake other activities to pursue their goals.

These youth show that they have a vision for a better world and they are willing to use their energy in contributing to the pursuit of peace, justice, prosperity and respect for human rights for all but with priority for those who suffer in our societies.

Youth Movement for Human Rights in Southeast Asia

ASEAN Youth Forum

The ASEAN Youth Forum (AYF) commenced in 2009 as a movement for the young people in Southeast Asia to create a better regional community. From 2009 to 2013, the movement made statements and recommendations calling on the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to be more inclusive and rights-based. In 2014, under the guidance of the Yangon Declaration (2014), the movement transitioned from a group making statements and recommendations to developing strategies for a youth-driven regional community.¹ In 2019, AYF was fully institutionalized as a legal association. In 2020, the AYF Secretariat was established in Jakarta. Since the movement began, AYF has been organizing annual forums hosted locally in the Southeast Asian countries to gather regional perspectives on youth rights issues.

Programs

AYF developed several programs that address a number of issues related to the youth in Southeast Asia.

a. School of Advocacy of Youth on Human Rights in Southeast Asia

The School of Advocacy for Youth on Human Rights in Southeast Asia (SAY-HR-SEA) was initiated from an AYF program in collaboration with

the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) and Plan International Asia and Pacific. This initiative aims to strengthen the engagement of AICHR with the stakeholders, partners, and young human rights defenders, raise the awareness of AICHR, and build capacity in engaging and working with AICHR. This program started in 2021.

In 2022, ten youth from Southeast Asian countries held an online forum from 18 May to 31 August to present their ideas, proposals, and recommendations on advancing human rights in the subregion. In 2023, the SAY-HR-SEA Program continued with three online sessions and nine on-site sessions, allowing participants to meet face-to-face. Twelve participants from Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam gathered in Bangkok on 10-12 August 2024. Some of the topics covered were Human Rights 101, Human Rights Convention, Advocacy 101, Advocacy in Practice, and Do's and Don'ts in Advocacy Meeting.

b. YUWANA Program

AYF believes that the youth in the subregion have multiple life perspectives which can be expressed through creative processes and are worth further amplifying. This is the main

focus of its YUWANA Program. YUWANA is derived from the Sanskrit word *yauvana* meaning youth. It stands for young, united, witty, accessible, and non-discriminative activism. Through this zine-making process, AYF aims to build solidarity among the youth in the subregion. This program started in 2020.

Under YUWANA program, young artists are invited to reflect and create artworks that channel their mind, feelings and inspirations into promoting human rights values in Southeast Asia.

This program has *YUWANA Zine* (a magazine containing youth artwork); YUWANA Exhibition (an on-site exhibition held to exhibit various artwork from the *YUWANA Zine* 7th edition), YUWANA Talk (Talkshow during YUWANA Exhibition where AYF invites experts in art and human rights to share knowledge and discuss activism, *Zine*, and their perspective on the exhibition topic), YUWANA Podcast (audio recording of the young artists' written artwork such as poems), and YUWANA Minority Circle for Artivism/YMCA (a space of advocacy that has roots from artivism and seed solidarity among minority youths in the region).

Since 2020, AYF has collaborated with three hundred

sixteen young artists across Southeast Asia and produced seven editions of *Yuwana Zine*. Each edition of *Yuwana Zine* has specific theme such as the following:

- 1st edition (2020) - On Feelings
- 2nd edition (2020) - Democracy, Voices, & Youth
- 3rd edition (2020) – Days of Activism
- 4th edition (2021) - LOCKDOWN
- 5th edition (2021) - Expressing Remembrance
- 6th edition (2021) - Creative & Disruptive Resistance.

In the 7th edition (2022), young artists were invited to reflect upon the theme of “Grief, Loss, and Human Rights.” A YUWANA Exhibition held in December 2022 was the first

offline event under the program. The event took place in Jakarta on 9 - 10 December 2022 at Perpustakaan Nasional Republik Indonesia (Indonesia National Library) with a total of six hundred eleven visitors, and in Bangkok on 10 - 11 December 2022 held at the Shopping Mall Gateway Ekkamai, with a total of two hundred six visitors. The exhibition in Bangkok was held in partnership with Plan International Asia & Pacific and Thailand Youth Institute.

C. Mini Fund for Youth

The Mini Fund for Youth is a program designed to support youth-led movements and activism that promote human rights, democracy, justice, peace and freedom across countries in Southeast Asia during the pandemic. The fund is intended for programs, initiatives and activities targeting young people between the ages of 15-35 who

have a vision of bringing positive change to their community in response to the issues of freedom of expression, the right to participate in political and public life, and the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment.

D. Youth Networking

AYF has expanded its network to promote human rights and democracy by engaging with youth communities, youth leaders, ethnic minorities, Queer Communities (LGBTIQ+), girls and young women, secondary school students, Human Rights Defenders and civil society organization/non-governmental organization (CSO/NGO) workers, indigenous communities (indigenous rights holders), non-English speaking youth, Persons with Disability or Youth with Disability, religious minorities, university/college students and



Examples of the artwork exhibited



Examples of the artwork exhibited

graduates, urban poor, young workers and professionals, youth in migration (exchange students, refugees, migrant workers, etc.), youth in rural area or conflicted area, and others representing those who are in the listed category of the program). As a result, AYF has become one of the leading organizations that has earned the trust of ASEAN in contributing to the ASEAN Workplan on Youth 2021-2025. Responses from all the participants and partners joining AYF activities are mainly positive and many of them express their satisfaction and hope to join them again next year.

E. Youth Rights Ambassadors

AYF introduced a Youth Rights Ambassador scheme in 2022. This is part of AYF’s efforts to further promote youth advocacy on human rights issues in line with the objectives of the organization and also for the organization to gain new knowledge in building strategies that can assist in the continuity and sustainability of its youth rights advocacy.

Nine young people of Southeast Asia were selected as Youth Rights Ambassadors in 2022 for three different circles and joined events where the rights of the youth were discussed among various stakeholders. Every circle has three Youth Ambassadors who serve for

three months for three different issues: The Freedom of Expression; The Right to a Clean, Healthy & Sustainable Environment; The Right to Participate in Political and Public Life. The Youth Rights Ambassadors directly advocate human rights by delivering interventions and asking critical questions in subregional forums based on AYF’s existing advocacy materials, voice out the concerns of youth within AYF’s network, and act as AYF’s focal persons.

Activities

In 2022, AYF held Youth Open Spaces online #18 on “Youth, Disability, and Digital Entrepreneurship.”



Insights

Providing safe space for fostering solidarity among young people, building their knowledge and capacity, and influencing the policymaking and decision-making process in the subregion is an important mission of AYF. It actively pursues this mission in collaboration with youth networks across the subregion and partners. It will persist in pursuing this approach to strive towards a sustainable,

inclusive, people-centered, and youth-driven subregional community.

For further information, please contact ASEAN Youth Forum (AYF): ASEAN Youth Forum Secretariat, Jalan Kalibata Utara 1 No. 32, Jakarta Selatan, Jakarta, Indonesia 12740; e-mail: secretariat@aseanyouthforum.org; <https://aseanyouthforum.org/>.

Endnote

1 See full text of The Yangon Declaration - ASEAN Youth Statement in this link: <https://aseanyouthforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/AYF-Yangon-Declaration.pdf>.

It also held an online Youth Talk Show titled “Self-made, Youth, and Imagining Inclusive Opportunities for Youth with Disabilities.”

AYF also implemented the following Mini-Fund activities:

- Ang Batang Kali Program (Young Steward of Nature Program) - Sikat Baler (The Philippines)
- Public Policy Advocacy for Preventing and Handling Sexual Violence - Lingkar Studi Feminis (Indonesia)
- Article Writing workshop for LGBTIQ+ youth - Queer Freedom of Expression/ GEM Peer (Cambodia).

Aside from Yuwana Exhibitions, YUWANA Talks and YUWANA Podcasts, AYF holds different activities each year including the following:

- Southeast Youth (SEAYouth) Festival;
- International Youth Talk to Promote Youth Voices at G20 Summit.

The SEAYouth Festival is an online festival for Young Southeast Asians to come together, empower each other, and voice out their concerns about the issues related to Southeast Asia. The festival is organized to observe the International Youth Day (August 12) and consists of a series of open spaces, forums, workshops, and other activities that would empower youth, hone their skills, and culminate in fostering solidarity for a sustainable rights-based, inclusive, people-centered, and youth-driven subregional community.

Understanding Statelessness

Stateless Network Youth

The Stateless Network Youth (SNY) is a volunteer youth group in Japan that works in cooperation with the NPO Stateless Network. SNY started in 2014 after students of Waseda University in Tokyo attended a seminar and a photo exhibition on statelessness.

The seminar was organized by Chen Tien Shi, a professor of the university.¹ Professor Chen invited Greg Constine, who photographed stateless people all over the world, to exhibit his photographs in the seminar to make people become aware of the existence of stateless people and their actual situation.

Professor Chen herself, who was born and raised in Japan, was a stateless person for over thirty years. Her experience of statelessness led her into a career spanning academia and activism. She also advocates for the respect for the human rights of stateless persons.

Several students led by Mihana and Christine (former students of Professor Chen) decided to establish SNY with the goal of gaining more knowledge about issues related to statelessness and raising awareness of the issues to the general public. They also started volunteering to support stateless people.

SNY attracted students from other universities as members. As of 2024, its members include

students from Waseda University, University of Tokyo, International Christian University, University of Tsukuba and other universities. Some high school students are also participating in SNY activities. SNY focuses on three approaches – learning, sharing and being there for the stateless people. SNY works to realize a society where stateless people can live comfortably.

First Activity

SNY held its first major activity in 2014. Organizing a photo exhibition focusing on the Rohingya people, SNY invited Rohingya people in Japan to share their experiences living as stateless persons. Since then, SNY has been holding some awareness-raising events and learning activities. It started field work in 2017 in Tawau and Semporna in Malaysia where many stateless children were living. SNY is also sharing information on SNS, Instagram (@statelessnetwork_youth) and YouTube (under the channel name Stateless Network Youth SNY)

Online Study Sessions

Due to the pandemic, SNY held an online seminar titled “What is ‘Stateless?’” in June 2020.

Starting with this first online event, it continued to hold online events. People of all ages

and affiliations participated in these events.

It created a picture story show for the online Waseda University School Festival. This picture story became the basis of its story book entitled *The Rainbow Pendant: What is Nationality?*

In addition, members held regular online study sessions to deepen their understanding of statelessness.

Malaysia Study Trip

SNY organized a study visit to Malaysia in 2017 to understand the situation of stateless children. The SNY members visited Tawau and Semporna in Sabah state in Borneo Island where a significant number of children were stateless.

A great number of the stateless children in Malaysia were born to families who came from Indonesia and the Philippines by boat. Some of the children were Sama-Delaut, a nomadic people living on seacoasts along the borders of the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia.

The study visit aimed to achieve the following objectives:

- a. Educational Outreach
 - To foster cultural exchange to broaden stateless children’s horizons and expose



Playing games with the stateless children



Bookmark making session based on the theme of "The Rainbow Pendant"

them to diverse cultures beyond Malaysia;

- To empower stateless children by providing them knowledge beyond the textbook and encourage them to pursue their dream regardless of their status.

b. Understanding and Advocacy

- To investigate their issues for awareness-raising in Japan, with the goal of advocating for their rights and working towards creating a supportive network in the country.



The students visited schools especially those established for stateless children. They went to the place of the Calvary Love Foundation that provided education to stateless children in Tawau, Sabah.

Calvary Love Foundation is the only licensed education center

for undocumented children in Malaysia, having over three hundred children between the ages of 5 to 16. Its tuition fees are meant to cover the basic cost of teaching materials. Some of the children apply for sponsorship for their education.

The basic education includes studying three different languages (Malay, English and Chinese) which are widely used in Malaysia, learning vocational skills to enable them to find good jobs in the future, and cultivating their attitude and behavior to address the violence and hygiene issues. This

education is expected to improve their status in life and bring positive impact to the local society.

Calvary Love Foundation offered lessons for secondary school education in 2017. But few students successfully pass the national examination given at the end of secondary education called the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) examination. Passing the SPM examination would provide more opportunities for the children to obtain stable and relatively high paying jobs in the future.

The SNY students met the teachers and school officials in Calvary Love Foundation to gain insight into their educational philosophies and methods that support and educate the children and identify specific challenges that they were facing.

They interacted with the children through activities like dancing, making handicrafts and storytelling.

They also visited the home of the stateless children to gain a genuine understanding of the current living conditions, struggles, and challenges faced by stateless individuals.

Most stateless families live in areas on the fringes of cities by building their own wooden houses. In some families, the parents left Malaysia and never returned, leaving their children in the care of neighbors or relatives.

Stateless families often have many children that make sending each child to school financially difficult. Some make

a living by farming and selling their produce in the market. But they face the threat of getting arrested by police during its monthly raid. They are forced to flee the markets during police raids.

The students visited the homes of stateless children in Semporna in Sabah where over 50 percent of the people were engaged in fishing, and most of them were Muslims. The families were poor and faced discrimination. They are known as Sama Bajau or Sama-Delaut, nomadic dwellers of the sea. They have been living on boats on the sea among the Sulu archipelago when the British people came to conquer the region. Since the Sama-Delaut used to live in the region without documentation, they could not show any

document proving that they lived in the area even before the region was divided into countries. The lack of documentation is a huge problem if one wants to gain citizenship, and many of the Sama-Delaut remain stateless.



The students also visited Buku Jalanan Chow Kit, a non-governmental organization that provided free educational opportunities to undocumented or displaced children living in Chow Kit in Kuala Lumpur. These children were unable to study in government schools.

The parents of these children were mostly migrant workers from Indonesia, who could not gain Malaysian citizenship for some reasons, making them stateless individuals in Malaysia.

Buku Jalanan Chow Kit has a “Home School” program using the national school curriculum from kindergarten to secondary school. The subjects taught include Bahasa Malaysia (Malay), English, Mathematics, Science, Geography, History, Japanese Language and public speaking.

The organization primarily relies on funds generated from its own online store and catering services, along with sponsorships from corporate partners.

Game and Storybook

The Malaysia study visit provided the information as well as opportunity to the students to develop materials that could be used to raise awareness of the plight of stateless children.

The members of SNY developed a game that would enable the players to understand the life of a stateless person. The board game tells the story of a stateless six-year-old Muslim boy who was born in Malaysia. The board game aims to show to the players the unfair situation that stateless people live in. It allows

the players to understand different life experiences and ultimately find happiness.

This game was first used in the 2023 Waseda University Festival.

They also developed a storybook entitled *The Rainbow Pendant: What is Nationality?* about statelessness in Japan. The book is based on Professor Chen's true story and explains the concepts of nationality and identity. It aims to inspire and encourage children to understand that everyone has the right to pursue their dreams and freedoms, symbolized by their own “rainbow pendant.”

After the publication of the storybook, SNY continued its activities such as organizing events, promotional activities, and storytelling to achieve its original goals of “making more people become aware of statelessness and the importance of identity,” and “giving hope to stateless children through the storybook.” SNY student members read the storybook to stateless children in schools in Malaysia in their 2023 and 2024 visits.

In 2024, SNY members translated the storybook into English and started selling it online (*The Rainbow Pendant: What is Nationality?* @Amazon Kindle). They also plan to use



the English version of the story to tell people around the world that everyone, with or without nationality, has a rainbow pendant, and can make it shine in its own unique color. This means that everyone can be a “Global Citizen.”

For further information, please contact: Stateless Network Youth (SNY) via e-mail: Stateless.youth@gmail.com and Instagram: @statelessnetwork_youth

Endnote

- 1 Professor Chen teaches at the School of International Liberal Studies in Waseda University.

Students' Engagement with Global Citizenship Education in Kyrgyzstan

Yumi Takahashi

The One Village One Product (OVOP) movement in Japan started in a rural area of Oita Prefecture in 1961. The vision of the OVOP movement was to increase the income and wealth of local people in the region. OVOP project was developed uniquely for Japan, but adapted later to other Asian countries.

In 2005, Kyrgyzstan revived the basic "unit of local socio-economic activities" established during the time of the rule of the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Russia)¹ by enacting the Law on Community-Based Organization (OCB) in February of that year. In light of this, community empowerment and community revitalization became the priorities of Japan's overseas development aid (ODA) in Kyrgyzstan.² Japan started to implement development and technical cooperation projects through Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in 2011. The projects became part of the Kyrgyz national project in 2023 and later expanded to other Central Asian countries.

The Course

The American University of Central Asia (AUCA) offers the "International Development and Cross-Cultural Communication" course where students explore Global Citizenship Education (GCED) as a transformative

education aimed at building a just, peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, secure and sustainable society. Students learn about the universal principles of GCED: Human Rights, Gender Equality, Non-Discrimination, and Non-Violence and respect for all.

The students study Japan's ODA, JICA, GCED, Gender, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the New Development Paradigm. They do field work by visiting communities where OVOP projects are being implemented. The field trips (OVOP Study Tour Project) cover the following projects:

- Gender Empowerment
- New Development Paradigm
- SDGs.

Student Activities

Students from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Japan studying the "International Development and Cross-Cultural Communication" course and the AUCA Japanese Club members at American University of Central Asia (AUCA) located in Bishkek city organized field visits in 2023 under the course. They were students from different disciplines such as Liberal Arts and Sciences, Anthropology,

Applied Math, Business, and Economics.

The students visited communities with OVOP projects. The field visits allowed the students to gain the experience of seeing theory being translated into practice. The students make videos on the field visits. The AUCA Japanese Club decided to introduce the students' videos on YouTube, www.youtube.com/@japanese_club_auca.

One video entitled "Student's Engagement with Global Citizenship Education through One Village One Product" created by an instructor and an alumnus of AUCA was shared with the university's Instagram channel with almost eleven thousand views.³

There are also videos on other OVOP projects including "Saiki" (Let's Revive) event (December 2023) introducing the concept of GCED to around forty to fifty students and four faculty members who participated in this event.⁴

Final Stage of the Project

At the conclusion of the course, a final event titled "Students' Engagement with Global Citizenship Education through One Village One Product (OVOP) in Rural Issyk-Kul,

Kyrgyzstan” was held on 9 December 2023.

The event included a presentation on the concept of GCED and the importance of Cross-Cultural Communication (Social-Emotional Domain) presentation. The three videos on the OVOP projects related to human rights were also shown:

- Empowerment of Women in the Issyk-Kul Region;
- Sustainable Development Goals and OVOP;
- New / Alternative Development Paradigms and OVOP.

There were approximately forty attendees in the final event including AUCA faculty, staff, alumni and students, and also students from Kyrgyz National University, Bishkek State School No. 70, Kyrgyz State Medical Academy, International University of Kyrgyzstan, and Kyrgyz-Turkish Manas University. Additionally, students created a Kahoot quiz



Student interaction with village felt producers

with fifteen questions to test the participants’ knowledge. The quiz was well-received, with active participation from all attendees.

This author and her student (Aidaana Khasanova) in AUCA wrote an article about an OVOP project entitled “Living Heritage of Indigo Dyeing as a Bridge between Japan and Kyrgyzstan” that appeared in the *Journal of Intercultural Dialogue*.⁵

The success of the project motivated this author and the leader of the AUCA Japanese Club to propose its continuation. The planned follow-up will focus on:

- Empowering young women through OVOP, and
- Long-Term Impact of Japanese Business Philosophy, including *Kaizen*,⁶ *Hou-Ren-Sou*,⁷ and the 5S methodology.⁸



AUCA students in the “Saiki” event, December 2023

As for further improvement of such kind of project, there is a need to provide concrete evidence supporting the OVOP model as an ideal development paradigm. The Alternative/New Development Paradigm Group could have made such presentation. Thus, this author should continue to explore and identify critical

perspectives to enhance the understanding of this model.

Conclusion

Students who participated in the course paid attention to the challenges that Kyrgyzstan faces regarding women by learning about gender, the reality that women face every day at OVOP workplace, the relationship of OVOP to the SDGs, and how OVOP local producers' conditions lean toward Alternative Development Paradigm.

Students were excited in finding out that there were young adults who work as felt producers. Since OVOP started in 2011 until now, the number of felt workers exceeded two thousand around the Issyk-Kul area. This means that women started to earn money and elders are encouraging young women to work. Surprised at two young felt producers who showed that they were self-sufficient, the students gained self-confidence.

Students acknowledged the empowerment of women through small-scale business in the villages of the Issyk-Kul region. The video produced by the students points out the patriarchal society in Kyrgyzstan and women have to work under certain situations. Aware of the situation, OVOP allows women to work at home on flexible working hours. The video also points out the lack of opportunities for workers to access medical insurance, pension funds, and basic economic opportunities. The people implementing OVOP acknowledge the need to

improve the project in some areas as part of their agenda.

Students who joined the OVOP fieldwork discovered personal and social tolerance. Coming from different cultures and being together in the field work made them realize something about their own selves and others. They learned differences in values, customs and behavior of people.

Students learned global citizenship through OVOP community-based project and realized the importance of sense of humanity at personal, local and global levels.

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Endnotes

- 1 See Yukimi Shimoda, "Unpacking the Influence of Business Approaches to Development on the Expansion of Women's Choices and Empowerment: A Case Study of a Handicraft Business in the Kyrgyz Republic," *Working Papers 231*, JICA Research Institute, 2022, https://jicari.repo.nii.ac.jp/?action=repository_uri&item_id=1086&file_id=22&file_no=1.
- 2 See Bobur Nazarmuhamedov, "Japan's ODA Policy toward Central Asia and the Caucasus: An Analysis of Japanese Assistance to Economic Development in Kyrgyzstan and

Armenia," *Journal of International and Advanced Japanese Studies*, Vol. 10, 169-185, 2018, https://tsukuba.repo.nii.ac.jp/record/46379/file_preview/JIAJS_10-169.pdf

- 3 See Instagram, www.instagram.com/reel/C4XhaaQOzYI/?igsh=MWp4NDF00Tk3eGtrNQ.
- 4 Watch "'Saiki' Contest as a Bridge between Kyrgyzstan & Japan (through Experiential Learning & GCED)," www.youtube.com/watch?v=redY7CpEj-4.
- 5 See IISNC-UNESCO, <https://online.fliphtml5.com/sedrz/ahul/#p=1>.
- 6 Kaizen is a Japanese term meaning "good change," "change for the better," or "improvement." See Kaizen: The Culture of Continuous Improvement, Safety Culture, <https://safetyculture.com/topics/kaizen-continuous-improvement/>.
- 7 See Viktoriya Kuzina, *Hou-Ren-Sou: Three Whales of Japanese Business Communication World*, SME Japan, www.smejapan.com/business-news/ho-ren-so-three-whales-of-japanese-business-communication-world/.
- 8 5S methodology refers to *Seiri* (Sort), *Seiton* (Set in Order), *Seiso* (Shine), *Seiketsu* (Standardize), and *Shitsuke* (Sustain). See Luciana Paulise, *Implementing Effective Workspaces with 5S Methodology!*, Simpli Learn, 6 June 2024, www.simplilearn.com/implementing-5s-methodology-to-achieve-workplace-efficiency-article.

Youth for Sustainable Development

Japan Youth Platform for Sustainability

Japan Youth Platform for Sustainability (JYPS) is a youth organization that creates a “place” to gather the voices of young people in Japan and deliver them to the Japanese government, the United Nations (UN), and civil society as policy, in order to contribute to the discussions on the “2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” adopted by the UN in 2015 and other international frameworks. They are working to create a sustainable society by delivering the opinions and thoughts of young people from diverse backgrounds to decision-makers, and by participating in opinion exchange meetings with the Japanese government and international conferences as youth. In addition, they hold events and conduct opinion surveys every year in order to gather the opinions of as many young Japanese people as possible.

Background to the Establishment

During the 3rd United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held in Sendai, Japan on 14-18 March 2015, four years after the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami occurred on 11 March 2011, discussion on a “Japan Youth Project” came up. The idea was based on a view of a need to harness the power of the youth in order to change policy and

society and create a future where young people live with peace of mind and play an active role. To realize this youth project, JYPS was established in 2015. JYPS since then has engaged in activities to raise the voices of young people from diverse backgrounds and help transform society.

Aims and Activities

JYPS adopted the following vision and mission:

VISION

We strive for a world with fair and equitable society by ensuring that the opinions of every member of society are equally reflected in policies.

MISSION

We enable youth to reflect their opinions on government and international frameworks by establishing, managing, and improving a democratic self-governing system that collects and coordinates the voices of youth.

In order to achieve these vision and mission, JYPS conducts advocacy activities by the youth in Japan, with the following three main categories:

1. Participation in international conferences, UN conferences, and other conferences that establish international frameworks;
2. Activities that convert the opinions of youth



Handing over a youth policy proposal, 9 September 2023

organizations and individual young people into policy recommendations, including the creation of policy documents, opinion gathering, and coordination; and

3. Campaign activities to widely appeal policy recommendations, gather significant support, and involve people.

As an advocacy organization, JYPS aims to bring about social change by making policy recommendations, participating in UN negotiations, holding meetings with relevant government ministries, organizing campaigns and events, and publishing articles, etc., and by giving voice to young people from a variety of backgrounds. Anyone under the age of 30, or a youth organization or an organization that works for young people, can join JYPS.

The activities of JYPS in recent years involved the following:

- Management of related events for the 2023 G7 Hiroshima Summit
 - Co-host of C7 (Civil 7) Japan 2023 Summit
 - Co-host of W7 (Women 7) Japan 2023 Summit
 - Host of Youth Summit in Hiroshima
- Advocacy activities for 2023 SDGs summit
 - Providing opportunities to learn about the SDGs (SDGs Youth Forum)
 - Handing over a proposal from the youth perspective

- Holding a youth dialogue event in New York
- Building cooperative relationships with other organizations and sectors.

Policy Recommendations

JYPS developed the “SDGs Youth Proposal 2023 - The Advocacy of the Youth, by the Youth, for a Better Society” mainly through discussions held during its online event entitled the “SDGs Youth Forum” held on the 28-29 July and 4-5 August 2023 with one hundred seven youth attendees. It also held the “SDGs Awareness Survey” from 28 July to 31 August 2023 and received one hundred and one responses.

The results of the online discussion and survey were reflected in the “SDGs Youth Proposal 2023.” One of the major recommendations dealt with the many challenges in achieving "meaningful" youth engagement.

As stated in the proposal:

It is simply not enough to seat youth at a table and let them speak at a few meetings in the decision-making processes. Towards a future of "meaningful" youth participation, we propose the following:

1. Consider diversity, inclusiveness, intersectionality, and representation of youth when [providing] seats for the youth.
 - a. JYPS defines youth as individuals who are 30 years of age or below, however, it is impossible for the few elected youth to represent the opinions of such a diverse group, which tends to generalize the issues regarding youth.
 - b. The same issue occurs with other vulnerable individuals for [their] meaningful engagement.
2. Provide youth with the opportunity to represent themselves in a safe, voluntary and democratic



Participating in the Action Days for the Summit of the Future, 20 September 2024

setting, and ensure the transparency of the process of electing, expressing opinions and decision-making for the meaningful youth engagement.

3. Provide an environment with a more fulfilling citizenship education.
 - a. The Japanese education system fails to nurture a sense of responsibility and ownership over issues in societies, which further prevents the youth from speaking up about their own issues.
 - b. Citizenship education is essential for a sustainable society. It protects one's rights, ensures diversity, inclusiveness, and intersectionality, and promotes individuals' participation in society.
 - c. Moreover, in today's information-loaded society, sovereignty education fosters awareness of social issues and equips youth with correct knowledge and information.

2024 Activities

In relation to the third Voluntary National Review by the Japanese government in 2025, JYPS conducted a survey of the voices and situations of young people in Japan from the beginning of 2024 in order to implement a Voluntary Youth Review (VYR). On 20 March 2024, as a kick-off for the process, JYPS made presentations on two themes with the cooperation of the Next Generation SDGs Promotion Platform, and invited expert and



Kick-off event for Voluntary Youth Review, 20 March 2024

youth panelists to discuss issues regarding SDGs with the participants. After that, a survey was conducted to reflect the voices and situations of many young Japanese people through the Voluntary Youth Review, which was the core of the project. Based on the seventeen goals of the SDGs, JYPS set four themes: "Inequality, Poverty, and Gender," "Education and Well-being," "Environment, Climate, and Biodiversity," and "Youth Participation," and gathered opinions through questionnaires, interviews, and discussion events.

Through the review, JYPS analyzed Japan's achievement of the SDGs from a youth perspective and made recommendations for future actions. This review was held in preparation for the "SDGs Youth Summit 2024 - Working with Youth for the Future." The youth summit clarified the voices and realities of Japanese children and young people who were

overlooked in numbers and statistics. JYPS will deliver these results to decision-makers at ministries, agencies, and international organizations, and will carry out advocacy activities to promote policies that reflect the current situation and issues facing youth.

For more information, please contact: Japan Youth Platform for Sustainability (JYPS), e-mail: japanyouthplatform@gmail.com; www.jyps.website/; www.facebook.com/JYPS2030/.

Communication may also be made to Kumiko Hongyo, Co-Secretary General, JYPS, e-mail: kumikohjyps@gmail.com.

HURIGHTS OSAKA Calendar

HURIGHTS OSAKA has collected a number of interesting articles on human rights promotion and education that would appear in the 14th volume of *Human Rights Education in Asia-Pacific*. The articles are from the different subregions of Asia and also from the Pacific.



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May be opened for inspection by the postal service.

HURIGHTS OSAKA, inspired by the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, formally opened in December 1994. It has the following aims: 1) to engender popular understanding in Osaka of the international human rights standards; 2) to support international exchange between Osaka and countries in Asia-Pacific through collection and dissemination of information and materials on human rights; and 3) to promote human rights in Asia-Pacific in cooperation with national and regional institutions and civil society organizations as well as the United Nations. In order to achieve these goals, HURIGHTS OSAKA has activities such as Information Handling, Research and Study, Education and Training, Publications, and Consultancy Services.

FOCUS Asia-Pacific is designed to highlight significant issues and activities relating to human rights in the Asia-Pacific. Relevant information and articles can be sent to HURIGHTS OSAKA for inclusion in the next editions of the newsletter.

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