

## Afterword

Interest in the SDGs is high in Japan, and it is gratifying to see that efforts to create sustainable local communities are gaining momentum throughout the country. However, there is a tendency in some quarters to think that just by mentioning the SDGs and pinning an SDGs badge to their chest, they have achieved the goals in some way. The key is to understand the ultimate objective of the SDGs, and to take steady steps to move as close as possible to the ideal of “no one left behind.”

Along with environmental and economic sustainability, which many municipalities and businesses already pursue, the SDGs aim to reduce poverty, inequality, discrimination, and isolation, and to create a society in which even the most vulnerable can live with pride and human dignity. In Japan, major challenges to fulfilling the SDGs remain, such as eradicating bullying and child abuse, improving the position of women in political and corporate policy-making, not pressuring women to take their husband’s name after marriage, protecting victims of domestic violence, and ensuring dignity with respect to menstruation. Other issues which need to be addressed include promoting social participation by elderly people and people with disabilities, establishing the legal status of LGBTQ people, regulating hate speech, improving the treatment of foreign technical intern trainees and immigration detainees, and eliminating statelessness.

The COVID-19 pandemic, which began in early 2020 and continues to this day, has upended people’s lives. As a result of mass closures of schools, restrictions on school activities, and the suspension of business by many companies, the year 2021 saw new highs in non-attendance at school, bullying cases, child abuse, domestic violence, and suicides among women and minors. In particular, single mothers and those in non-regular employment experienced severe difficulties. We must remind ourselves that there is an enormous amount of work to be done to make Japan a society where all people are treated with respect and as human beings of intrinsic value.

We began our work on developing municipality-level indicators for Miyagi Prefecture as a follow-up to *SDGs and Japan*. At the time, some people questioned this choice. It was argued that in an area where a major disaster had thrown peoples' lives into chaos, and where the recovery process was still underway even ten years later, to evaluate figures from only the outsiders' viewpoints could produce heavily biased outcomes. It was also argued that the unique characteristics of the region should be taken into account. To avoid unilaterally imposing views from outside, we tried to find out as much as we could about the issues facing local communities and their perspectives. I would like to thank the authors who provided articles on specific issues, as well as many organizations and individuals in Miyagi Prefecture, including local governments, civic groups, the Miyagi Co-op, and universities, who provided us with advice and cooperation. For this volume, we asked people working on the ground in Miyagi Prefecture to write about specific case studies. I am confident that their vivid and moving experiences of the Great East Japan Earthquake and the COVID-19 pandemic will serve as a valuable guide for those working in other regions. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all contributors.

Yoichi Mine (Executive Director, JICA Ogata Sadako Research Institute for Peace and Development) and Shinya Kawamura (Designated Senior Assistant Professor, Chubu University) took on huge responsibilities, the former serving as co-editor and the latter managing the data indexing and mapping. Illustrator Maki Onodera contributed wonderful pictures for Chapter 1, 1-2 and "Create human security indicators for your own town!" I would also like to thank Haruka Nagashima of Akashi Shoten, the editor who was in charge of the original Japanese edition of this book, for his understanding and consideration.

The greater significance of creating Human Security Indicators is that they can help the residents of local communities, in partnership with local governments, organizations, and businesses, to address local priorities from the perspective of those who have been left behind. I sincerely hope that unique local indicators will be developed in every part of the world, involving local citizens as the driving force.

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Human Security Forum

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