

Joint Submission of Public Comments on Japan's Draft Revised National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights

by the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre (BHRRC) and the World Benchmarking Alliance (WBA)

30 October 2025

The Business & Human Rights Resource Centre (BHRRC) and the [World Benchmarking Alliance \(WBA\)](#) jointly submit the following comments on Japan's [draft revised National Action Plan \(NAP\) on Business and Human Rights](#), published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 1 October 2025. This submission provides specific recommendations and the rationale for each proposed revision.

In advance of this process, BHRRC and WBA also released a [joint policy note](#) in August 2025 to help inform discussions on the revision of Japan's NAP on Business and Human Rights.

Section	Proposed Changes and Rationale
Chapter 2. Priority Areas	<p>Suggestion:</p> <p>It should be emphasised that in implementing human rights due diligence, measures to “leave no one behind” and efforts to address specific human rights issues, companies should integrate meaningful stakeholder engagement into the due diligence process. Such engagement should take into account gender considerations and adopt an intersectional approach.</p>
Chapter 2: Priority Areas 1. Human Rights Due Diligence and Supply Chains (1) Understanding of the Challenges and Actions Taken to Date	<p>Text suggestion:</p> <p>While some companies have initiated dialogue and information exchange with stakeholders, further efforts are encouraged to promote engagement [and to implement comprehensive human rights due diligence across the whole supply chain].</p> <p>Rationale:</p> <p>To ensure respect for human rights in line with international standards and to maintain a level playing field, it is essential to implement comprehensive human rights due diligence that includes all key components such as identifying and assessing risks, preventing and mitigating adverse impacts, tracking the effectiveness of responses, and ensuring transparent disclosure of information.</p>
Chapter 2: Priority Areas 2. Promoting Measures to “Leave No One Behind”	<p>Text suggestion:</p> <p>In addition to issues such as excessive working hours and harassment, which are also common among Japanese workers, foreign workers face distinct challenges, including difficulties in</p>

<p>A. Understanding of the Challenges and Actions Taken to Date</p> <p>(2) Migrant Workers</p>	<p>raising concerns about human rights violations due to language and cultural barriers and unequal access to information [, as well as other challenges frequently faced by migrant workers, such as debt bondage resulting from recruitment fees]. Addressing these issues in a comprehensive manner, including those affecting employers, workers, and local communities, can help improve Japan’s overall productivity, promote economic growth, and foster a society where Japanese and foreign nationals live and work together in harmony.</p> <p>Rationale: Cases have been reported, including within Japan’s Technical Intern Training Program where migrant workers pay recruitment fees to intermediaries in their home countries before departure and as a result fall into debt bondage. Such debt ties workers to exploitative conditions and is recognised as a key indicator of forced labour. Under the new “Training and Employment” scheme, workers may still be required to pay recruitment fees of up to two months’ wages. In implementing this new system, the Japanese government should take into account the vulnerable position of migrant workers, introduce appropriate protective measures, and encourage companies to apply the employer pays principle so that migrant workers are not burdened with any unjust debt.</p>
<p>Chapter 2: Priority Areas</p> <p>3. Thematic Human Rights Issues</p> <p>(1) AI, Technology and Human Rights</p> <p>B. Direction of Efforts and Examples of Specific Measures</p> <p>① Balancing the Promotion of AI Innovation and the Management of Associated Risks</p>	<p>Suggestion: It should include the promotion of human rights due diligence that addresses human rights risks arising from the development of artificial intelligence (AI).</p> <p>Rationale: The rapid advancement of AI, automation, and robotics raises important questions about their impact on human rights and labour. The growth of the gig economy, enabled by new technologies, has transformed working patterns by creating more flexible jobs and new opportunities for some, while undermining livelihoods for others. Without effective oversight, AI may amplify structural inequalities and deepen existing vulnerabilities, particularly for those who are already socially marginalised and at greater risk of exclusion or exploitation.</p>
<p>Chapter 2: Priority Areas</p> <p>3. Thematic Human Rights Issues</p> <p>(2) Environment and Human Rights</p>	<p>Text suggestion: [In particular, as demand for renewable energy grows rapidly in response to climate change measures, environmental degradation and human rights abuses have intensified in connection with mineral extraction and the deployment of renewable energy projects. Many of these adverse impacts are concentrated among</p>

<p>A. Understanding of the Challenges and Actions Taken to Date</p>	<p>local communities, Indigenous Peoples, and human rights defenders, underscoring the increasing importance of ensuring a just transition.]</p> <p>Rationale: Accelerating the transition must go hand in hand with fairness. This requires grounding corporate action in human rights and environmental due diligence, ensuring fair negotiation processes, and enabling shared prosperity with workers and communities directly affected, including Indigenous Peoples.</p>
<p>Chapter 2: Priority Areas</p> <p>5. Corporate Disclosure</p> <p>(2) Direction of Efforts and Examples of Specific Measures</p> <p>① ②</p>	<p>Text suggestion:</p> <p>① Taking into account international standards and developments, conduct discussions on disclosure on respect for human rights [including progress made by companies and remaining gaps in their implementation with multi-stakeholder participation] when necessary.</p> <p>② Enhance corporate disclosure through dissemination of best practices [and third-party benchmarks] on information disclosure [, and promote greater transparency as well as the assurance and strengthening of accountability].</p> <p>Rationale: To make corporate progress on human rights visible and assessable, transparency, disclosure, and independent evaluation mechanisms are essential. International benchmarks that evaluate global companies such as the Corporate Human Rights Benchmark (CHRB) and KnowTheChain are useful for understanding the status and remaining challenges of Japanese companies in comparison with international standards, and for indicating directions for improvement.</p>
<p>Chapter 3: Government's Expectations of Companies</p> <p>1.</p>	<p>Text suggestion: At the same time, to [build responsible supply chains and] effectively realise respect for human rights in practice, several challenges have emerged, including [the practical implementation of measures to prevent and mitigate identified human rights risks, as well as] issues related to remedy and the extension of efforts to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and local communities.</p> <p>Rationale: The revised draft does not clearly address the gap between “identifying” and “addressing” human rights risks, particularly within supply chains. Beyond simply raising awareness, it is essential to ensure that identified risks are translated into concrete prevention and mitigation actions. According to data from the</p>

	<p>Corporate Human Rights Benchmark (CHRB), while 43% of Japanese companies assessed identify human rights risks in their supply chains, only 4% demonstrate concrete actions to address them—significantly lower than the 31% average among other G7 countries.</p>
<p>Chapter 3: Government's Expectations of Companies 2.</p>	<p>Text suggestion: [Effective human rights due diligence includes all key elements such as identifying and assessing risks, taking measures to prevent and mitigate adverse impacts, tracking the effectiveness of measures taken, and ensuring transparent disclosure. It is essential that all of these elements are implemented in practice.]</p> <p>Rationale: Companies should be expected to demonstrate what they consider to be effective human rights due diligence and to build responsible supply chains through such comprehensive processes. The government is also expected to promote the establishment of effective human rights due diligence by facilitating discussions aimed at strengthening and embedding these practices, while taking into account the potential for future legal frameworks.</p>
<p>Chapter 4: Framework for the Implementation and Review of the Future Action Plan</p>	<p>Suggestion: When assessing and reviewing implementation progress, outcome-based indicators should be established. If it becomes clear that voluntary efforts such as action plans are insufficient, the government should explicitly consider the development of a legal framework, including mandatory due diligence.</p> <p>Rationale: There is currently limited progress under voluntary frameworks, as many companies' efforts remain inadequate. Moreover, as discussions on mandatory due diligence are advancing not only in Europe but also in Asian countries such as Indonesia and Thailand, Japan should also move forward with similar deliberations. Otherwise, there is a risk that Japanese companies will be left behind in ensuring a level playing field in the international business environment.</p>
<p>Section (Submitted in June to NAP Roundtable/Working Group)</p>	<p>Proposed Changes and Rationale</p>
<p>Chapter 2: Priority Areas 1. Human Rights Due Diligence and Supply Chains</p>	<p>Text suggestion: As outlined in Chapter 1, while awareness and implementation of human rights due diligence are increasing, particularly among large corporations, a key issue remains the need to promote efforts to</p>

<p>(1) Understanding of the Challenges and Actions Taken to Date</p>	<p>address human rights risks within supply chains,] as well as to promote understanding among SMEs, which make up the majority of domestic companies</p> <p>Rationale: Regarding the implementation of human rights due diligence, it should be noted that many Japanese companies — including large corporations — are failing to translate identified human rights risks into concrete measures to prevent and mitigate these risks within their supply chains.</p> <p>Reference: World Benchmarking Alliance https://www.worldbenchmarkingalliance.org/research/stateofplaybhr/</p>
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About WBA

The World Benchmarking Alliance (WBA) is an international non-profit organisation that produces free and publicly available benchmarks assessing how the world’s most influential companies are contributing to addressing the most pressing sustainability challenges of our time, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). WBA’s Social Benchmark evaluates 2,000 keystone companies on their core social performance, including 158 Japanese companies. The Corporate Human Rights Benchmark (CHRB) provides an in-depth assessment of companies in high-risk sectors on their human rights performance. The latest benchmark results covering all WBA assessments will be published in early 2026.

About BHRRC

The Business & Human Rights Resource Centre is an international organisation working in the field of business and human rights, with teams providing leadership across four continents. Working in partnership with organisations and collaborators around the world, we aim to place human rights at the centre of business, build a fair and just economy, advance climate justice, and end human rights abuses. We collect data on the human rights performance, practices and policies of more than 10,000 companies across over 180 countries. Through our website, the world’s only dedicated knowledge hub on business and human rights, we provide up-to-date and comprehensive news and analysis in 11 languages.