

Women's Policy Guideline in Taiwan

Equal Participation and Decision-Making

January 9th, 2004

Passed by the 18th Committee Meeting of Commission on Women's Rights Promotion, Executive Yuan

Foreword

The Constitution which symbolizes a modern and democratic state was established in our country during the worldwide civil rights movement. In the last 50 years, the protection for women's rights and the promotion of female status has been greatly improved, and we are proud of this achievement. Although the Constitution acknowledges the rights of women, in the past, women still took full responsibilities of family care and reproduction, while men controlled capital and production advantages. These inequalities have been advocated by women's rights groups and gender related issues have been discussed by scholars which affect policy making. In 1997, the cross-departmental "Commissions on Women's Rights Promotion, Executive Yuan" was established which included representatives of women's groups and scholars.

After the first-ever transfer of the ruling party in 2000, a better mutual balance on gender was reached based on the election of the first female vice president. The ruling party has since been actively promoting the rights of women and implemented that at least one quarter of the cabinet directors are female. This is a big step in encouraging women to participate in politics.

Several steps have been taken to improve the educational resources for women: equal access to educational resources for both sexes; the diminishing of existing gender stereotypes in educational development; and long-term learning programs for women. These efforts have helped women in many ways and gained recognition from various communities.

In terms of social welfare, the "Five Community Care and Service Projects" aims at lightening the burdens of family care off women; the "Family Assistance

Regulation for Women in Disadvantaged Conditions” provides emergent caring services for single parents and victims of domestic violence; and the “Caring and Council Measures for Spouses from Foreign Countries and China” helps immigrant women adopt to the new life and surroundings.

As for the labor market and economy, the “Gender Equity in Employment Law” promotes the status of working women, integrates loans for women entrepreneurship, and assists women who want to start their own business.

When it comes to health care and medicine, the government provides routine check-ups for women to prevent cancers such as breast cancer and cervix cancer, breast-feeding rooms in public areas, and woman-friendly medical environments.

As for personal security, the government established a “113 Woman-Child Protection Hot Line,” and made stronger preventions on domestic violence, sexual abuse, and harassment in working places and school campuses.

With the collaboration and cooperation between the government and the local community, the women’s rights movement has flourished in the past few years. However, the government still needs to be intact with current social issues, especially those regarding women and amend policies for the benefit of women.

Basic Concepts: Equal participation and decision- making

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After full-evaluation of the women’s movement, the current social situation and its potential, and also in comparison to the international trends, the philosophy “All Creatures are created equal and co-exist together” comes to mind. Following this, we have established the basic concept that “equal participation & decision- making” can assist the women policy guidelines and the key points are as follows:

1. **Create a “Mutual Respect; Objective/Subjective Shifting” Structure:** In a patriarchal and discriminating society, women are seen as sex objects, reproducers and family caretakers. Sex, reproduction, and caretaking provided by the female body have been taken for granted. The

complicated social structure has objectified women, turning them into subordinated tools, the second sex and a secondary citizen. By following the philosophy as shown, we will be able to create a “Mutual Respect; Objective/Subjective Shifting” structure which respects diversity in society and aims for a woman-friendly environment.

2. **Create a political mechanism that encourages democratic participation, interest sharing, and wiser use of resources:** This philosophy also implies that resources are limited. Both the government and its people need to show mutual respect for one another; the shift from objective to subjective and vice versa is sometimes necessary. By using a political mechanism which encourages democratic participation and the sharing of interests, resources shall be dispersed more evenly and accordingly.
3. **Create a dual economic mechanism:** From a woman’s view point, this philosophy aims at creating a dual economic mechanism which meets the needs of women. It combines the socialist side of welfare, public, non-profitable with capitalist side of production and free market, balancing the needs of both sides.

Basic Principles

Women continue to remain unequal in many different aspects such as political participation, labor market, economy, welfare, education, health care and personal security. Based on the concept of “equal participation & decision-making,” our families, working and living environments will be more consciously aware of the gender differences. These principles are as follows:

1. **Mutual decision making and political participation for both sexes:** Any policies regarding the state or social issues should include both sexes, and some specific policies may require the expertise of women. This will lead to a less biased society, creating a balanced and innovated state.
2. **Labor policies to increase women’s labor participation and financial self-support:** Policies should encourage women to venture into the labor market and stabilize the economic security and social participation. At the same time, the government needs to establish daycare facilities for working women and actively assist the family support system.
3. **Welfare policies that provide caretaking facilities and help women become self-supportive:** Policies should realize the needs of women and establish caretaking facilities. They need to assist women to become

self-supportive, gain wages, and break from social isolation. Pensions should cover different working patterns of women and their social contribution; provide them with economic security, especially to elderly women.

4. **Education policies should emphasize gender quality and respect for diversity:** Policies should respect the differences in class, ethnicity, region, talent and gender. Students need to have access to a wide range of resources to suit their needs and be taught accordingly. Educators need to avoid following a certain set of standards and they need to provide a multi-cultural learning environment that lets the students learn about and respect diversity.
5. **Health care policies emphasizing health care priorities and gender awareness in medical ethics:** Policies need to provide adequate health care for women; medical personnel should be trained to be consciously aware of the gender differences and medical research needs to include more gender related topics.
6. **Create an environment where women feel secure and respected:** Women need to be able to freely lead their own lives and develop individual personalities in a safe and peaceful environment. Women should be free of fear, violence and sexual abuse and harassment.
7. **All policies should include the needs of women in ethnic minorities:** The state should respect the differences in women and minorities should be placed first in the line. Women with different ethnic backgrounds may have different experiences, and they need to be respected and recognized when policies are being decided.

Contents of the Basic Principles

1. Political Participation
 - Central government should establish a gender equality mechanism.
 - Increase women's political participation rate to 40%.
 - Emphasize gender equality in governmental civil service system.
 - Establish democratic mechanisms among governmental departments and encourage female representatives.
 - Encourage women to participate in international affairs.
2. Labor and Economy
 - Implement the "Gender Equality in Employment Law" and "Employment Service Law;" lift barriers which prevent from women

entering the labor market; create a woman-friendly working environment.

- Assist women who want to start their own business; identify the barriers that hinder female entrepreneurship and discuss the strategies to overcome them.
- Adopt flexible working hours for working women with special needs.
- Provide more family care facilities so that women can work and accumulate their human capital.
- Improve research analysis of women's participation in the labor force and encourage women to invest in labor market.

3. Welfare and Depart from Poverty

- Establish a caretaking welfare system.
- Combine interests with fully employed women and promote family-support services.
- Establish an economic security system for elderly women.
- Help minority women depart from poverty.
- Personnel and budget increase for welfare institutions.

4. Education and Culture

- The urgent need to pass the "Gender Equity in Education Law" (draft) for equal educational rights.
- Review and revise related regulations to implement gender-equal educational policies.
- Actively research in women's studies and support talented women in cultural arts.
- Ceremonies or rituals which discriminate women should be reformed.
- Terminate gender and ethnic discrimination through the mass media.

5. Health Care and Medicine

- Health care policies, medical ethics and education should respect gender differences.
- Stress the importance of sex education, awareness of the female body and self, and the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies.
- Gender is an important factor in health care policies- making.
- Create a woman-friendly medical environment and respect the medical needs of women.
- National health insurance should cover the needs of all women of

region, class, gender and race.

- Active research in regards to women's health care and diseases.
- Review and revise the medical system for women.
- Recognize women's contributions to health care; provide them with resources and rewards.

6. Personal Security

- Personnel and budget increase in professional institutions; implementation of personal security for women policies.
- Different policies to suit the different needs of women of age and social status.
- Women should be a part of the decision making in social security mechanism.
- Gradually increase female participation in policy-making in the police force.
- Stronger public-security environment to insure the safety of women.
- Amend the "Domestic Violence Prevention Law," establish gender equality criteria.
- Strictly regulate the police, the judicial courts, the medical, education and social establishments to leak any information regarding the victim to the press.