

Promotion of Gender Equality in Japan

Country Paper of Japan

for the 3rd Meeting of the ASEAN+3 Committee on Women

Outline

This paper briefly describes the progress of promotion of gender equality in recent years.

First, overall progress in gender equality performance in the areas of “economic participation and opportunity” and “political empowerment” is lacking, especially in light of Japan’s economic performance. However, that fact means that women carry a big potential for revitalizing Japanese economy and for activating the society.

Second, under the Basic Act for a Gender-Equal Society, which was enacted in 1999, the Basic Plan for Gender Equality is formulated every five years to promote a gender-equal society.

The third part of this presentation focuses on the outline of the Third Basic Plan for Gender Equality, which was formulated last December.

In the new plan, some new priority fields, such as “gender equality for men and children,” “respect for international regulations” and “contributions to “equality, development, and peace ” are established in response to changes in the socioeconomic situation.

The Government set 82 “performance objectives” to ensure the effectiveness of the Plan, among which, the performance objectives concerning men’s participation in housework and childcare (i.e. percentage of men who take childcare leave) and the objectives of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were included.

The Government of Japan set the performance objectives of the MDGs as “working in collaboration with each nation, international organization, and NGO in order to achieve the MDGs.” At the UN MDGs Summit held in 2010, the Government of Japan announced “Japan’s Global Health Policy” to provide assistance of \$5.0 billion in the field of health (including contributions amounting to \$800 million to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria) and “Japan’s Education Cooperation Policy” to provide \$3.5 billion in assistance in the field of education over five years starting from 2011. Japan attached importance to these areas, because they serve as a basis for developing countries for sustainable development.

Finally, the Government of Japan’s efforts to promote gender equality will be explained. The Council for Gender Equality studies and deliberates on basic policies and measures on important

matters. Also, the Council conducts gender impact assessment and evaluation and monitoring. The process, which is similar to gender responsive budgeting (GRB), contributes to ensure the promotion of gender equality. Also, in the Third Plan, GRB is explicitly stated for the first time. Through these endeavors, we try our best to establish best practices in promoting gender equality.

Gender Conditions in Japan

(Gender conditions in Japan from the international point of view)

According to the Gender Inequality Index (GII), which is calculated by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Japan ranks 11th. In other words, Japan performs relatively well. That is because of its outstanding performance concerning health issues (i.e. maternal mortality ratio and adolescent fertility ratio, among others).

However, it ranks 94th according to the Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI)¹. The reason is that, although Japan performs very well in health issues, its performance in the areas of “economic participation and opportunity” and “political empowerment” is not good enough compared to its economic performance.

(Population decline and aging of population with a falling birthrate)

Japan is currently experiencing population decline and aging of its population, together with a falling birthrate. The total fertility rate was 1.39 last year, which is far below the replacement level. On the other hand, in 2055, the percentage of aged population is expected to rise to over 40%.

That will lead to a decrease in the labor force population and the number of consumers, which will lead to a decline of economic growth.

(Women’s potential to revitalize the economy)

Considering the current status of the labor participation ratio of women in Japan in each age group, we can observe a typical M-shaped curve, with women in their 30s at the bottom of the M shape. On the other hand, the number of women who don’t form the part of labor force population but who wish to enter the labor market (primarily belonging to the age group that constitutes the bottom of the M shape) is 3.4 million, which is about 5% of the total labor force

¹ The Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI), introduced by the World Economic Forum in Japan, is a framework for capturing gender-based disparities (0.00= inequality, 1.00=equality)

population in Japan.

Also, it is well known that there is a positive correlation between the GGGI and GDP per capita; the performance of Japan in the GGGI is not remarkable, because of its poor gender performance, especially in the economic and political areas.

However, if we turn those facts the other way around, there is room for women to fulfill their potential. We assume that by promoting women's participation in the labor market, the impact of the change in the population of the labor market can be alleviated. Reducing the gender gap is the key to revitalizing the Japanese economy.

(Conclusion)

The active participation of women is expected to have a positive impact on Japanese society as well as on its economy. That is, the clear correlation between birthrates and women's labor participation is also well known, which means that active participation of women in society contributes toward enhancing demographic sustainability in the long run.

That is the reason why the "New Growth Strategy" decided by the Cabinet last year decided to enhance the women's labor participation rate.

As a conclusion, it is vital to promote the realization of a gender-equal society as a top-priority task in determining the framework of 21st-century Japan.

Legal Framework for the Promotion of Gender Equality

Japan's scheme for gender mainstreaming is briefly explained here from the legal perspective.

The Basic Act for a Gender-Equal Society was enacted in 1999, with the aim of creating a gender-equal society. The Basic Act lays out the five pillars relating to the formation of a gender-equal society. It also clarifies the roles of the public administration (the state and local governments) and citizens, i.e., the responsibilities and basic policies.

The Act obliges the government to make special considerations to ensure that every system and practice remains neutral toward men and women. It also obliges to establish the Basic Plan for Gender Equality to comprehensively and systematically implement policies that promote the formation of a gender-equal society.

Third Basic Plan for Gender Equality

Based on the Basic Act for Gender Equality, the Basic 5-year Plan for gender equality is formulated every five years (2000, 2005, and 2010).

The Third Basic Plan for Gender Equality, which is now in force, was approved by the Cabinet last December. The highlights of the plan are described below.

a) Creation of priority fields in response to changes in the socioeconomic situation

The Third Plan has 15 priority fields, shown below, among which the underlined sections are introduced.

(15 priority fields)

1. Expansion of women's participation in policy decision-making processes
2. Reconsideration of social systems and practices and raising awareness from a gender-equal perspective
3. Gender equality for men and children
4. Securing equal opportunities and treatment between men and women in employment
5. Men's and women's work-life balance
6. Promotion of gender equality to bring about vibrant agricultural, forestry, and fisheries communities
7. Support of men and women facing living difficulties such as poverty
8. Creation of an environment in which people such as the elderly, the disabled, and non-Japanese people can live comfortably
9. Elimination of all forms of violence against women
10. Support for women's lifelong health
11. Enhancement of education and learning to promote gender equality and to facilitate diversity of choice
12. Gender equality in science and technology and academic fields
13. Promotion of gender equality in the media
14. Promotion of gender equality in the areas of regional development, disaster prevention, environment, and others
15. Respect for international regulations and contributions to the "equality, development, and peace" of the global community

b) Setting “performance objectives” for each of the priority fields to make it more effective

In the Third Plan, the Government set 82 “performance objectives²,” which is almost double the 42 objectives of the Second Plan, to ensure the effectiveness of the Plan. The objectives correspond to the 15 priority fields. In this paper, some examples of performance objectives focusing on 1) women, 2) men, and 3) MDGs are described.

(Examples of the performance objectives focusing on women:

Proportion of women in government positions equivalent to or higher than the director of the central government ministries and agencies)

The percentages of women in policy decision-making processes are very low in Japan: therefore, the 1st priority field among 15 priority fields is the “expansion of women’s participation in policy decision making processes.”

For the priority field, the government set 17 performance objectives. For instance, the government set the performance objective concerning the proportion of women in government positions equivalent to or higher than the director of the central government ministries and agencies, which was only 2.2% in fiscal year 2008. The government decided that the percentage should be raised to 5% by the end of fiscal year 2015.

(Examples of the performance objectives focusing on women:

Employment rate for women between the ages of 25 and 44)

As mentioned above, the women’s labor participation according to age indicates a typical M shaped curve, which means it is not easy for Japanese women to continue working after having children.

That is why the government set the performance objective concerning the employment rate for women between the ages of 25 and 44, which is now less than 70%, to be raised to 73% by 2020. The objective is related to the priority fields of both “securing equal opportunities and treatment between men and women in employment” and “men’s and women’s work-life balance.”

(Examples of the performance objectives focusing on women:

Rate of continued employment for women before and after delivering their first child)

² “Performance objectives” refer to standards that the government as a whole aims to achieve by comprehensively implementing the specific measures stated for each of the priority fields.

The government also set the goal concerning the rate of continued employment for women before and after delivering their first child, (which is now less than 40%,) to be raised to 55% by 2020.

This objective is to “secure equal opportunities and treatment between men and women in employment” and “men’s and women’s work-life balance.”

(Examples of the performance objectives focusing on men:

Time spent on housework and childcare by husbands with a child or children less than six years old)

The government set some goals for men, too. For instance, average Japanese husbands with small children spend only 1 hour per day on housework and childcare. The government would like to raise that amount of time to 2.5 hours, the same as the French husbands, who spend the shortest time with their children in Europe.

The performance objective is related to the priority fields concerning “reconsideration of social systems and practices and raising awareness from a gender equal perspective,” “gender equality for men and children,” and “men’s and women’s work-life balance.”

(Examples of the performance objectives focusing on men:

Percentage of men who take childcare leave)

Also, the government would like to raise the percentage of men who take childcare leave to 13% by 2020, as the performance objective for “gender equality for men and children” and “men’s and women’s work-life balance.”

The government is now running a campaign for men who share child-rearing as “cool” or “cutting-edge.” The name of the campaign is “Ikumen project,” because “Ikumen” in Japanese means “men who share in child-rearing.” It also evokes an image that it is a cool and cutting-edge thing to do.

However, last year we were disappointed to see the outcome went down from 1.72% (2009) to 1.38% (2010).

(Examples of the performance objectives focusing on the MDGs)

As described above, the priority field concerning “respect for international regulations and contributions to the “Equality, Development, and Peace” of the global economy” was newly introduced.

For the performance objective for this field, we set the goal concerning the MDGs. We set the performance objective as “working in collaboration with each nation, international

organization, and NGO to achieve the MDGs.

-Japanese Commitment

At the UN MDGs Summit in September 2010, , Japan announced its new Global Health Policy and Education Cooperation Policy 2011-2015 as a commitment to the MDGs.

- MDGs 4, 5 and 6: Health

As for the MDGs 4, 5, and 6, which are related to health issues, Japan has committed itself to provide assistance of US\$5 billion over five years beginning in 2011, to save the lives of 430,000 women and 11.3 million children, in cooperation with other partners.

Specifically, Japan provides assistance centering on three pillars: 1) maternal and child health, 2) three major infectious diseases, and 3) response to global public health emergencies and various health crises due to natural disasters and global conflicts, threats such as new influenza viruses.

Japan launched the MNCH (Maternal Neonatal and Child Health) assistance model “EMBRACE” (Ensure Mother and Babies Regular Access to Care) at the MDGs Summit in September 2010. EMBRACE is an effective package of preventive medication and clinical interventions for maternal and newborn survival at both community and facility levels. It aims to create linkages between communities and facilities by introducing innovative strategies, and to create high impact for maternal and child health interventions to ensure a combination of care starting from pre-pregnancy to after the childbirth. This model stresses the importance of enhanced partnerships among all stakeholders and of a broad-based approach, encompassing various measures such as better infrastructure, safe water and sanitation, and other social developments.

- MDGs 2: Education

Education, on the other hand, in conjunction with good health, provides the basis for participation in society. Japan promised to provide US\$3.5 million in assistance over five years beginning in 2011, to contribute to the achievement of the MDG 2, with other education-related MDGs. Through this contribution, Japan will help to create a quality educational environment for at least 7 million children, including those who have been marginalized and are living in conflict- and disaster-affected areas. To that end, Japan is cooperating with various stakeholders.

Promotion of Gender Equality

(Council for Gender Equality)

As part of the reform of the central government implemented in January 2001, the Council for Gender Equality was established. The Council is headed by the Chief Cabinet Secretary and composed of 12 ministers and 12 specialists.

The Council's major purposes are as follows.

First, the Council is required to study and deliberate on basic policies and measures and important matters with regard to promotion of the formulation of a gender-equal society in response to consultations with the Prime Minister and/or other Cabinet ministers. The results of study and deliberation are then submitted to the Cabinet ministers or to the Prime Minister for their consideration.

The second purpose is to monitor the implementation status of government measures on the formulation of a gender-equal society. Results and opinions are submitted to the Prime Minister and other Cabinet ministers.

Third, the council is required to assess the gender impacts of the government measures. Based on the analysis results, the Council proposes to the Prime Minister and the Ministers policies to promote the formation of a gender-equal society.

Those missions are conducted by establishing Special Committees under the Council for Gender Equality.

(Example of the gender impact analysis and proposals by the Council)

Through the processes mentioned above, the government intends to ensure the PDCA cycle in promoting gender equality. Although the government does not call the process gender responsive budgeting (GRB), it regards it as an effort similar to GRB in concept.

An example of this process is described here, by taking up the report titled "Support of the Elderly for Living Independently (2008)." In the report, the Special Committee of the Council for Gender Equality conducted monitoring and gender impact assessment and evaluation of elderly people.

The Long-Term Care Insurance System was introduced in 2000. The system aims to support the nursing care of elderly people across all level of society in response to Japan's rapid aging. To balance the financial conditions, premiums are decided according to individual financial condition and the projected service cost. Under the public insurance system, the demand for elderly care has been increasing; that is why insurance premiums have been rising. It is crucial for Japan to ensure the sustainability of the social system such as the Long-Term Care Insurance

System. The Special Committee dealt with the theme.

Through the gender impact analysis, many of the differences in the situation between men and women were made clear.

As for the supply side of the care service, it is observed that around 70% of main caregivers in households are women. Therefore, there are differences in time spent on caring activities between women and men. Most care workers are women, too. About 40% of women's care workers are non-regular employees, and earnings of care workers tend to be lower than average earnings.

As for the demand side of the service, it is observed that most users of Long-term Care Insurance aged 65+ are also women. Women tend to need care for longer periods than men, and the causes of care needs are different between women and men.

Based on the analysis results, the Council proposes to the Prime Minister and the Ministers policies to promote the formation of a gender-equal society as follows;

- Promotion of employment and social participation of elderly people of both sexes
- Improvement of systems and environments that increase the economic independence of elderly people
- Support for the independent living of elderly people within families and communities
- Ensuring initiatives in medical services and preventive care by taking into account differences between women and men
- Constructing foundations for quality healthcare services

Those proposals were carefully considered in the process of formulating the Third Basic Plan, and the necessary policy measures were determined in the Plan. Through the monitoring process by the Special Committee of the Council, the implementation of these measures is being monitored.

Through these processes, the PDCA cycle is assured.

(Gender responsive budgeting in the Third Plan)

Also, in the Third Plan, GRB is explicitly stated for the first time. It says, based on studies of the practices of other countries, the government should investigate how the GRB in Japan could be improved in the future.

Through these endeavors, we try our best to establish the way of promoting gender equality.