

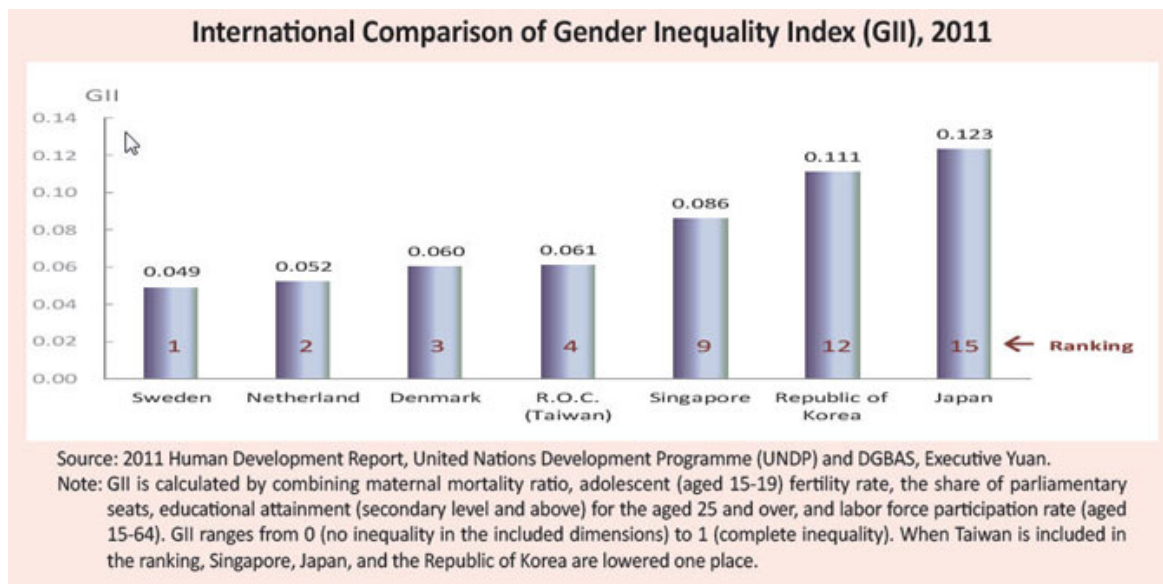
The Politics of Gender Equality in Japan and Taiwan

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This paper focuses on policies related to gender equity; and their implementation, as well as machinery to seek gender equality in Japan and Taiwan. In both nations, a combination of internal women's movements and the invocation of external treaties and mandates related to sex discrimination were crucial (though Taiwan is not a participant in these, in recent years, it has followed the precepts articulated by the international gender community).

At the outset, and to provide a context for the analysis, it should be noted that on international indices related to gender equality including the Gender Empowerment Index compiled by the World Economic Forum which evaluate women's international standing related to roles in economic and political life and decision making (elected and administrative), Japan ranks # 42 (UNDP). The Gender Gap index finds women in Japan at #104, down from # 79 in prior years, reflecting disparities in economic, political, educational and health fields. (World Economic Forum, 2010, 2014). Women in Japan occupy only a small percentage of managerial posts (10% in 2005, up from 8.9% in 1995) (Gender Equality Report 2006); just 1.7 % of senior public management positions. In elected positions, in the more powerful lower House women comprised 8.1 % in 2013, (CSIS, compared to 9.4% of representatives in 2005, and 19% of the Upper House (a considerable improvement in the latter though not the former, over recent years). The data places Japan as # 116 of 140 nations included in the survey. (IPU, 2015; Economist 3/29/2014)). Women have achieved greater equality as members of governmental advisory committees; now with numbers approaching 30%, a goal of gender equality policy. In the economic sphere, as of 2005, women still earned just 50% of male hourly wages. (MHLW, Japan, 2005). Women's equity options are still constrained by traditional values upholding the

male breadwinner model; that women should stay home while men work outside the home. (Gender Equality In Japan, 2007). In Taiwan, though far fewer women than men work in the labor force, under 50%, those who do earn 83% of male salaries, a higher percent than in the US! They rank 61 of the nations surveyed in 2011 in contrast to Japan, lagging at 123. (Global Gender Foundation for Women's Rights Promotion 2014).



The record on gender equality policy is a mixed one.

In Taiwan, arguably though women are still underpaid related to men, their international rankings appear to have improved greatly, although Taiwan is not listed on international indices, meaning that the data comes from its government. The data below provides additional information on the ranking of Taiwanese women in comparative perspective.

性別平權指數 (GEI)

Gender Equity Index (GEI)

年 Year	數值 Value	排名 Rank
2005	67.13	-
2006	67.31	-
2007	67.70	-
2008	69.49	53
2009	71.43	36

說明：1. GEI 用以衡量兩性平權落差及改善狀況，值介於0~100之間，值愈高愈好。
2. 我國資料係由本總處依Social Watch公式，將我國資料帶入計算而得，各年綜合指數之編算，以Social Watch所採計各項指標之資料年為主。
3. 為與國際比較有相同基準，綜合指數及排名經公布後，將不予回溯修正。
4. Social Watch 2010年及2011年未發布GEI相關數值及排名。

更新日期：2014-09-15

Update：2014-09-15

性別落差指數 (GGI)

Gender Gap Index (GGI)

年 Year	數值 Value	排名 Rank
2007	0.6797	53
2008	0.6934	52
2009	0.6959	53
2010	0.7051	42
2011	0.7082	40
2012	0.7129	39
2013	0.7155	39
2014	0.7214	41

說明：1. GGI用以衡量兩性平權落差，值介於0~1之間，值越高越好。
2. 我國資料係由本總處依世界經濟論壇(WEF)公式，將我國資料帶入計算而得。各年綜合指數之編算以WEF所採計各項指標資料年為主，且WEF針對各指標女男比例設有平等基準，除健康平均餘命女男比例為1.06、出生嬰兒女男比例為0.944外，其餘為1，比例超過平等基準者以平等基準值取代。
3. 為與國際比較有相同基準，綜合指數及排名經公布後，將不予回溯修正。

更新日期：2015-03-18

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<http://eng.stat.gov.tw/ct.asp?xItem=25280&ctNode=6032&mp=5>

The paper will consider politics of gender equity first in Japan, and then in Taiwan.

Gender equality in Japan

The Japanese government was motivated in part by external pressure in adopting and implementing a gender equality law in 1999. (Gender Equality Policy in Japan, 2007).

In the aftermath of the 4th world Conference on Women, held in Beijing, for the first time in Asia, in September 1995, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action were adopted. Among the twelve tenets of the Platform for Action adopted by the conference Forum were many involving women's roles in decision making and expansion of rights. Partially in response to these recommendations, and also because the Japanese government reports, with other nations, to the UN Commission on the Status of Women, with an annual review of progress (at which it has always been found to fall short of the stated goals), measures to create formal structural change were undertaken. Among these were strengthening the national machinery for the advancement of women.

In 1994, the Headquarters for the Promotion of Gender Equality was set up within the Cabinet. In addition, the Office for Gender Equality and the Council for Gender Equality were established in the Prime Minister's Office with the formulation and overall coordination of plans for matters related to promoting the formation of a gender-equal society, as well as promoting the Basic Plan for Gender Equality and formulating and implementing plans for matters not falling under the jurisdiction of any particular ministry. A 1995 revision of the Gender Equality Law, the Second Basic Plan, included goals related to equal participation in policy and decision making processes, increased support for women, and efforts to promote work and life balance as well as prevention of domestic violence. (Gender Equality Report, 2006). A further revision of the Basic Law for Gender Equal Society was passed in 2005 to clarify basic concepts pertaining to formation of a gender-equal society and indicate the direction these should

take, and purportedly to comprehensively and systematically promote the State's, local governments' and citizens' measures pertaining to formation of a gender-equal society.

At that time, 74% of men and women polled by the Cabinet Office (2004) indicated that they felt that men were still treated more favorably in all aspects of Japanese society.

The Basic Law for Gender Equality

The Basic Law on Gender Equal Society (also known as the Law for Cooperative Participation of Men and Women in Society) passed in June 1999. Japanese Basic Laws are intended to address fundamental issues of the state system and are presumed to take priority in relation to other laws in the same policy area. The Basic Law system creates a framework which is supposed to lead to enactment of other legal measures and laws by the national and local governments by providing a basic guideline within which bureaucrats and Diet members may formulate new policies and laws and judges will be asked to hand down decisions. In the analysis to follow, the significance of the largely symbolic law on gender equality policies in Japan will be considered.

The term “gender equality” was first employed in Japan as a response to the international women's meetings and treaties discussed above. The Japanese government in the mid-1990s began to feel that greater gender equality could have a positive impact on the moribund economy and the declined (and still declining) birth rate, although such recognition was always balanced by competing discourses of traditional values and business as usual. (Osawa interview). Women's groups submitted a report on “A Vision of Gender Equality” (*Vision Statement*) to the Prime Minister via the Advisory Council for Gender Equality of the Prime Minister's Office.

The passage of the Basic Law on gender equality appears to have been motivated in large measure by the “endogenous external pressure” from the international arena and prompted by internal feminist interest group efforts used to prod the Japanese government. (Osawa interview; Gelb 2003). Feminist groups, and some Diet members, petitioned in 1995 to create national machinery for women: a Ministry for Women’s Affairs and Women’s Headquarters. The impetus provided by the Beijing + Five meeting in 2000 in New York City also helped to galvanize support from bureaucrats for new legislation. (Osawa, 2000 interview).

The preamble to the Basic Law (Law # 78, 1999) stresses “human rights” and calls for genuine equality between men and women, emphasizing the ability of each citizen to exercise individuality and ability regardless of gender, in language reminiscent of international documents. Among the law’s provisions are efforts to secure “non-discriminatory treatment” of women including positive action, to harmonize work and family life as well as sharing of home related activities, secure equal employment, and eliminate violence against women (the latter two were added in a Basic Plan for Gender Equality, subsequent to passage of the law). (Women in Japan Today, January 2001, 3-4; Basic Law for Gender Equal Society approved by the Cabinet, 12 December 2000). The Basic Law does not mandate any responsibilities for companies and lacks provisions for a monitoring system, such as an ombudsperson, as initially recommended. It was generally agreed that this legislation was vague and would require active enforcement to become meaningful. While some view the Law as useless and inadequate, others have seen it as a resource for changing future policy. Passage of the law was facilitated by the existence of the coalition government then in power which included the female headed Socialist and New Sakigake parties; Domoto Akiko of the Sakigake and Doi Takako of the Socialist Party of Japan. The latter stipulated the creation of gender equality national machinery and the passage of a

basic law on gender equality as the price for their coalition cabinet support. (Osawa, 2000, 5).

The opposition Democratic Party also prepared an alternative version of the legislation. A series of six town meetings to include public comments were held after the preparation of an interim report; it is estimated that about 2,000 people participated in these. (Osawa interview). Women's voices influenced the preamble and gained recognition of women's rights as human rights, but they were not able to influence the bill's content to the same extent. Observers note a disjunction between the more progressive language embodied in the initial *Vision Statement* and the far weaker language of the actual legislation, with regard to issues of indirect discrimination, surname change and the like. (Yamashita interview). There was much controversy over the naming of the law; whether it should be called the *Danjo Kyodo Sankaku Shakai Kihon- Ho* (gender equal society) or *Danjo Byodo* (gender equality). The first title was adopted (modifying the original) and calls for "Gender Equal Society" (meaning joint participation by men and women) rather than the second, more controversial term, "Gender Equality" favored by most feminists. The revised name as a frame for the policy may have been more appealing to conservative politicians, who feared the idea of equality of outcomes rather than equality of opportunity, as the law presently suggests, given their opposition to affirmative action, feminism, positive discrimination, etc. (Osawa, 2000, 6).

The bill has had at least two significant results. The administrative structure to implement the new Basic Law was given impetus by the reorganization of government ministries and agencies, operationalized in 2001. One result was the strengthening of the Bureau (which replaced the former Office) of Gender Equality, and Council for Gender Equality, established in the newly created Cabinet Office in January 2001 Office, and intended to serve as a force for "mainstreaming" gender policy, in line with efforts to institutionalize such policy systematically.

Its goal was to provide this agency with more power than individual ministries, to act as policy coordinator by providing opinions to other ministries and agencies through review and advisement, monitoring and investigation, in addition to disseminating surveys to assess effectiveness of specific policies. (Osawa, 2000, 13). The Gender administrative arm and secretariat of the Council, could formulate plans “not falling within the jurisdiction of any particular ministry”. (Women in Japan Today, January 2001, 2). A Liaison Conference for the Promotion of Gender Equality supposedly links the work of these bodies with NGOs and local governments. (Osawa, 2000, 7). Nonetheless, since its creation, the role of the Bureau as policy advocate has been relatively weak. (Yamashita interview).

Another provision of the Basic Law is that it be operationalized by prefectural and local governments, in order to become more than a symbolic document (promotion of gender equality or *shorei suru*). This is stated as an expectation, not an obligation; (*doryoko gimu*); they were to develop basic plans for gender equality and then pass appropriate ordinances to follow them up. Ultimately, the Basic Law required prefectural and local, rather than national, implementation.

The Adoption of the Basic Law

It is likely that agreement to pass this Basic Law was a trade-off for the government’s failure to create an independent Ministry for Women’s Problems, which would have represented a more direct approach to the creation of “national machinery”. (Ueno and Osawa, 2001, 10-92).

The bill establishing the Law passed unanimously in both houses reflecting its government sponsorship, and perhaps also because it lacked concrete provisions. There was a provision for public comment; the Council for Gender Equality received over 3,600 comments,

the first time that more than 1,000 had been received in a similar process. However, poll data at the time revealed that only 10%-15% of Japanese people had any familiarity with the new law. (Osawa interview).

The Basic Law that was passed was heavily influenced by recommendations of the Council for Gender Equality. As a means to follow up on this policy, the National Personnel Authority in May 2001 published guidelines for hiring and appointing women to the national civil service; at that time, there were only 1.2% in the highest positions (these numbers have remained constant until the present time). They suggested that each ministry should set goals and consider the ratio of women to total employees and quotas at the time of examination for the service. A major effort that has been successfully promoted by the Gender Equality machinery has been to increase women's participation in advisory councils and committees, which rose from 2.4% in 1977 to 24.7% in 2001; now close to the goal of 30%. (Ibid.; Women in Japan Today, 2009).

Local Enforcement

Perhaps the most significant impact of the Basic Law to date has been at the local level. Articles 8 and 9 of the Basic Law specify that prefectural and local governments are responsible for making efforts to take positive measures to promote a gender equal society (*doryoku gimu*). As of April 2008, all prefectures and close to a thousand municipalities had considered gender policy; most have also established liaison conferences to coordinate departmental policies. (Women in Japan Today, 2009). Proposals for policies related to gender equal society emanated from administrative leadership, citizen groups or assemblies and /or assembly members.

Many governments utilized public hearings, although they were not mandated, in order to develop equality plans and then ordinances to implement them. While the policies adopted were not binding, but rather required a good faith effort, numerous towns and prefectures took these initiatives seriously. Some developed ombuds systems in order to resolve gender related issues; others required private records (*joetsu*) related to gender equality measures. Although quotas per se are prohibited by the Japanese Constitution, ratios were employed in some localities and prefectures - either a 50/50 or 60/40 ratio of female to male representation on local advisory committees. Ordinances also addressed other gender related issues including sex segregated public high schools and the Japanese custom of calling boys' names first when the daily school register is read. Policies adopted vary with each to date). However, consistent with the lack of an enforcement process related to this policy, no ordinances stipulate punishment for violation of these new initiatives at any level.

Despite these apparently positive efforts, in other instances, local and prefectural governments have opposed the adoption of gender policies. In both of Japan's leading urban areas, Tokyo and Osaka, the policy outcomes have been disappointing to feminists.

Many in Japan speak of a "backlash" against even those modest policies adopted. Right wingers, including housewives led by a male former Diet member (Murakami) who maintains that gender equality is as radical as "communism", appeared to be winning the struggle to develop prefectural policy. (Hashimoto interview; e-mail 30 December 2002). A group called the *Nihon Kaigi* (Japan conference) and its women's branch, *Nihon Josei Kaigi*, attacks the concept of "gender equal society" as denying the differences between men and women, and demanded that such differences (e.g., respect for women's role as traditional homemakers) be acknowledged in provisions of the regulations being drafted. (WWIN Letter to

CEDAW February 2003; Yamashita interview). Women intellectuals who served on the Council of Gender Equality were vilified in the conservative press (e.g., *Nihon Jiji Hyoron* - Japan Current Events Critique) as radical feminists who challenged “family values” and introduced Communist ideas in the guise of “gender equality”. (8-15 March 2002). This newspaper also attacked the notion of gender free education proposed by Ministry of Education bureaucrats. Other national newspapers, including the Yomiuri Shinbun and Sankei Shinbun, engaged in unremitting, front page publicity for these anti gender-equality interests. The hostility spilled over to other policy issues, including education reform, adoption of local ordinances on gender equality and the proposal for civil code reform relating to women’s surnames. As a result of the “backlash”, there have been limited positive changes affecting the role and status of women in Japan, now some fifteen years after the Gender Equality Law’s passage, despite the initial progress in some areas related to implementation of this policy (personal communication, Hashimoto, email June 2009).

Now fifteen years or so after the initial enactment of the Gender Equality Law, the policy process and implementation have drawn to a virtual halt. It should be noted that Japan also passed an Equal Opportunity Employment Law in the 1980’s. Although beyond the scope of this paper, as with the Gender Equality policies, it has been honored more in the breach than actuality (see Gelb, 2003, for a fuller account).

Gender Equality Policy in Taiwan

As in Japan, in Taiwan scholars and experts from the feminist community involved in working with women bureaucrats adopted both the “outsider tactic” of invoking international gender norms and the “insider tactic” of lobbying for support. As noted earlier,

although Taiwan is not a member of international bodies due to blockage by China, it has tended to follow the transnational strictures as a model for its own policies in recent years.

Perhaps surprisingly, given its very high representation of women in the legislative *yuan* or parliament (over 33%), in contrast to Japan's far lower numbers, Taiwan has been a relative latecomer to passage of policies related to sex discrimination issues. In contrast to Japan, Taiwan has employed quotas and affirmative action to improve legislative representation nationally and locally.

Promoting gender mainstreaming and building Taiwan into a nation where men and women's rights are equally and fully protected are top priorities for the ROC government according to a recent leading government official. Premier Jiang Yi-huah said on March 7, 2013:

Taiwan's public sector has made tremendous progress in striving for gender equality this past year," Jiang said, adding that one such example is ratification of the U.N. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

The ROC Cabinet also unveiled a set of policy guidelines and set up the Department of Gender Equality to oversee implementation of all relevant measures. (Chang, Taiwan Today. 3/9/13)

Citing the latest government statistics, Jiang said 93 percent of all public sector organizations have met workplace gender quotas, up from 56 percent at last count. The quota requires that males and females comprise at least one-third of the workforce in central and local government agencies. Unlike the Japanese, the Taiwanese have employed quotas and targets across the board in government and the private sector, but not in the executive *yuan* of the government.

These efforts saw the percentage of senior female officials increase from 16 percent to 22 percent last year, with senior female staffers up from 20 percent to 26 percent, he said.

The private sector is also carrying its share of the gender equality load. According to a survey released March 8 by U.K.-based assurance, tax and advisory firm Grant Thornton International Ltd., the percentage of women holding senior management positions in Taiwan increased from 27 percent in 2012 to 31 percent, higher than the global average of 24 percent. (Chang, Taiwan Today 3/9/ 2013).

Although Taiwan can take great pride in its vibrant democracy and economic standing within the Asia-Pacific region, it still lags behind many other economies in making headway on gender equality. (Chiayi Ho 3/26/2010, Taiwan Today). According to statistics produced by the Cabinet-level Council for Labor Affairs in 2007, women in Taiwan holding top or executive management positions, including lawmakers, accounted for 17.53 percent of the workforce. This figure is higher than Japan and South Korea, which stood at 9.25 percent and 8.81 percent respectively. However, it was lower than Singapore at 30.52 percent and Hong Kong at 29.59 percent. (Fung Mei Lin, December 2008, pp. 47-64).

According a review of Taiwan's policies covered in a 2009 Human Rights Report released by the U.S. State Department, March 11, much still needs to be done to come up to scratch when it comes to attaining gender equality goals in Taiwan. This is despite milestone legislation such as the Gender Equality in Employment Act (GEAA), which was implemented nine years ago.

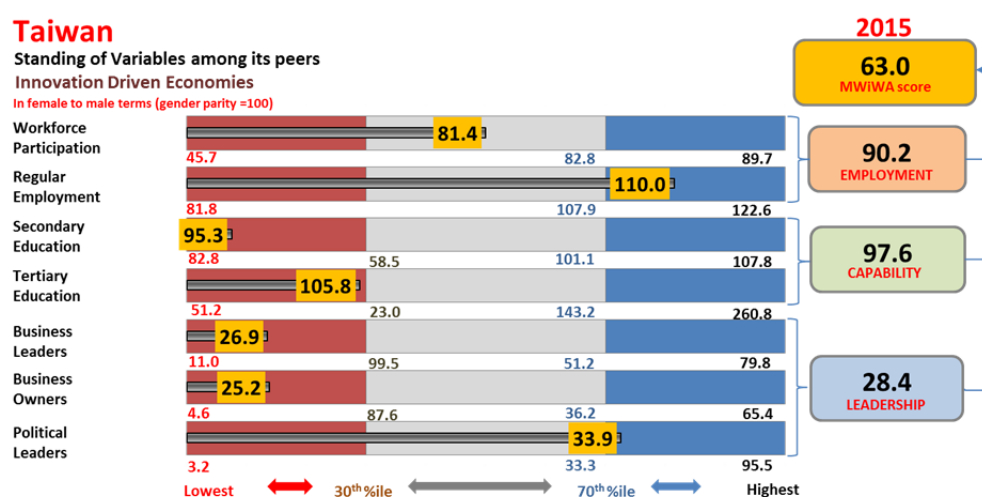
The GEEA, which took effect Jan. 16, 2002, was enacted with the aim of reducing gender-based discrimination in all aspects of employment, while providing for equal treatment with regard to assignments, promotions and salaries.

But the groundbreaking legislation has made only limited progress, with the U.S. report finding that women in Taiwan continue to be promoted less frequently, occupy fewer

management positions and work for lower pay than their male counterparts. The ROC government also came in for criticism over its failure to raise public awareness on this issue. (In fact, most of the numbers in Taiwan are superior to those in the US).

Designed to narrow the gender gap, the GEEA covers three fundamental issues: employment opportunities, working conditions and remuneration, and sexual harassment in the workplace. The act's weakness may lie in its ambitious goal to cover women employed in both public and private sectors according to one observer. Since these sectors have different working conditions, female employees in these areas face being treated differently.

Although there is up-to-two-years unpaid maternity leave granted under the GEEA, pregnant women working for private companies, in spite of being entitled to claim this benefit, tend not to do so out the fear of being laid off. "Such a situation exists far less in the public sector as female employees' working rights are protected by the GEEA and the Civil Service Protection Law. Various factors, including traditional moral values and patriarchal societal norms, also contribute to sex discrimination in Taiwan's labor market. The Table below indicates that in a number of areas, Taiwanese women have made significant economic gains.



Mastercard Index of Women's Advancement, February 27, 2015 (MWiWA 2015 Asia Pacific Region)

Recent Developments:

Although not directly connected to the establishment of a Gender Equality commission, other efforts have been made to equalize male and female roles in society in Taiwan. On November 14, 2014, the legislature passed an amendment to the Gender Equality in Employment Act (性別工作平等法) to make paternity leave longer when spouses are in labor, grant five paid days off for pregnant employees to undergo antenatal examinations and clarify that half-pay is guaranteed for menstrual leave. (Alison Hsaio, [China Post](#) 11/22/13).

Revisions have been made to seven articles of the existing act, which stipulates that while employees' spouses are in labor, their employers must grant them three paid days off as paternity leave.

The newly passed amendments grant five more birth-related paid days off to pregnant employees for prenatal checkups, an increase from the existing maternity leave granted before and after childbirth for a combined period of eight weeks.

Also granted by the new law is an extension of paternity leave for employees with spouses in labor to five days.

With paternity leave extended to five days that could be combined with two weekends, employees with spouses in labor can now have a total of nine days to stay with their spouses and take care of the baby.

The Ministry of Labor has estimated that about 174,000 employees will benefit from the change every year and that employers need to shoulder an extra annual expenditure of NT\$470 million (US\$15.2 million). About 140,000 pregnant employees will benefit from the days off for pre-birth examinations annually, costing employers about NT\$790 million, the ministry said.

The existing act allowed one day of menstrual leave each month and if the cumulative menstrual leave did not exceed three days in a year they were not to be counted toward days off for sick leave and be entitled to half-pay, while the amendment makes the three-day non-sick-leave menstrual leave half-paid, rather than unpaid.

Employees now may also apply for unpaid parental leave before any of their children reach the age of three years old after being employed for six months, instead of one year under the existing law.

Penalties related to gender discrimination have also been raised from between NT\$100,000 and NT\$500,000 (US\$3,225 and US\$16,126) to between NT\$300,000 and NT\$1.5 million. However, implementation efforts are less clear though the proposed fines may help to put some “teeth” into the policies. The ROC Cabinet also unveiled a set of policy guidelines and set up the Department of Gender Equality to oversee implementation of all relevant measures.”

Citing the latest government statistics, Jiang said 93 percent of all public sector organizations have met workplace gender quotas, up from 56 percent at last count. The quota requires males and females comprise at least one-third of the workforce in central and local government agencies. These efforts saw the percentage of senior female officials increase from 16 percent to 22 percent last year, with senior female staffers up from 20 percent to 26 percent (Ibid.)

The private sector is also carrying its share of the gender equality load. According to a survey released March 8 by U.K.-based assurance, tax and advisory firm Grant Thornton International Ltd., the percentage of women holding senior management positions in Taiwan increased from 27 percent in 2012 to 31 percent, higher than the global average of 24 percent. Taiwan advances in promoting gender equality (Chang 2013/3/9 : 03/08/2013, Taiwan Today).

The Effort to Develop National Machinery on Gender Equality in Taiwan

With regard to efforts to establish full scale government machinery to monitor sex discrimination against women, efforts have been less than satisfactory to women's activists who have pressed for such a development.

The efforts to create a women's policy institute had their origins during the Taipei City mayoral election campaign of 1994, a few activists, led by Professor Lio Yu Xio, were put in charge of drafting policy proposals regarding women's welfare. Lio advocated the 'Scandinavian Model', meaning partnership between civil society and the state. In particular, she advocated the establishment of a commission composed of both city government officials and representatives from women's organizations. After Chen's victory as mayor (Chen Shui Bian), Lio strongly advised him to initiate a commission as soon as possible. It was established in 1995, under the name of the Commission for the Promotion of Women's Rights. This was the first time that women's organizations had access to policy planning at the level of municipal government. This was a historical landmark in the development of the women's movement.

In addition to this committee, which was under the control of the Taipei City Government, the central government also set up a commission of similar nature, in response to great pressure from women's organizations and the general public. In 1997, a nationally recognized body, also called the Commission for the Promotion of Women's Rights, was formally established under the Executive *Yuan* and convened by the prime minister. At that time the central government was under KMT control (the more right wing Chiang Kai-Shek party). For the first few years, this commission remained dormant; in contrast, the commission of the Taipei City government was active.

Women's organizations were perhaps not entirely aware of the importance of government restructuring until they were invited by Ministry of the Interior to attend a meeting

regarding the possibility of setting up a ‘bureau of children and women’s welfare.’ They were infuriated with the familiar phenomenon that women and children had been put together as one and the same thing by public policy and by the general public. After a short period of expressing dissatisfaction, members of women’s organizations soon realized instead of criticizing the current draft, it was better to adopt a pro-active approach by advocating an independent organization in charge of enhancing women’s status. The idea for a ‘Ministry of Women’s Rights’ came out as the initial idea, and shortly afterward many pointed out ‘gender equality’ was more appropriate than ‘women’s rights’ and of some consensus was reached accordingly.

Diversity of opinions began to emerge regarding the position of the organization: was this a ministry—an organization which had full-fledged stipulated authority of policy making and implementation, or a commission—an organization at the ministerial level but only in charge of policy planning and inter-ministerial coordination? Within women’s organizations this had been hotly debated. As the number of ministries was strictly limited in the government restructuring plan, members of women’s organizations were practical enough to know it was “impossible” to push for a ministry of gender equality. Women’s organizations finally decided to settle for the Commission on Gender Equality. (Lin, Fung Mei, 2008, 47-64).

At the beginning, it functioned as a council, not as a formal department; only after 2011, it became the Bureau of Gender Equality established as a result of women’s groups’ pressure. Before 2011, the issues of who would be leading the council and the composition of the council were critical. Women’s group insisted that the prime minister should be the chairperson of the council in order to effectively implement the decisions reached in the council. At the beginning of DPP Chen’s (Shui Bien, former mayor of Taipei) administration, the PM was not the chairperson of the council and did not pay any attention to the council. After women’s groups

protested, the PM chaired the council for the meetings at least every four months, which greatly improved the effectiveness of the council to instruct other ministries to follow the councils' decisions. The composition of the council as stipulated is 1/3 government ministers, 1/3 gender experts, and 1/3 women's groups' representatives. The gender experts and women's group representatives in 2003-2004 formed a collective coalition within the council to exert somehow a stronger impact upon government's policy to monitor government's policy implementation and push for the adoption of gender mainstreaming program within government. But since it is not a formal institute, without an independent budget and staff to function on a more regular basis, its impact compared to other government councils, though quite substantial, is still limited regarding change in the entire system. That's why women's groups after 2002 pushed for the formalization of a women's committee or bureau, which later came into place in 2011, but since then, they have not yet been able to evaluate its influence in a comprehensive manner to fully assess its effectiveness. (Yang, Wan Min, May 21, and June 1 2015 interviews, email).

In Taiwan, the Awakening Foundation, a strong women's group, has been actively involved in pressing the government to establish a formal committee and gender mainstreaming. There are laws on gender equality in Employment and in Education, but there is no general gender equality law. The passage of these two laws can be said to be independent of each other, each related to different social events or concerns of that time. Some women groups argued that they should have the gender equality law before the gender equality agency was established in 2011 under the Prime Minister's office. But the government did not respond to this demand. They simply considered it (gender machinery) as part of the larger project of administrative reform/reinventing. Women's groups also took the advantage of the government's initiative at reforming government (at the beginning the government said they would reduce the

size of government, later changed to reshaping its structure) to influence establishment of a gender bureau. So the gender machinery did not come about based on its own organizational law or gender equality legislation; instead it was incorporated as part of the government organization law.

Conclusion

This essay has sought to demonstrate the process and implementation of gender equality policy and institutionalization of gender machinery to monitor the policies in Japan and Taiwan. In both nations, efforts by women's groups, political leaders under specific and favorable circumstances (which often do not endure), bureaucrats, and other occasional political allies, have led to some progress. However, progress is often incremental, and may be subject to reversal as the Japanese case illustrates. In the Taiwan case as well, the outcome has fallen short of the demands of activist women for a stronger gender related government institution. Progress requires constant vigilance and monitoring by women activists and their friends, with reference as well to the transnational gender communities directives and mandates whenever possible.

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